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An Essay on the Religion of the Bambara
/Essai sur la religion bambara/

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Foreword

114 The present work is part of a series of studies undertaken in French Sudan since 1931 by the Griaule Missions.

In the course of the sixth, seventh, and eighth expeditions (1946, 1948, 1949) the research dealt with the religious institutions of the Bambara. In this essay we have presented, with the necessary comments, the results of the inquiries conducted by the author, while taking into consideration the work of her teammates.

The information was gathered in the region of Bamako at Koulikoro, Kayo, and Kangaba; in the circle of Ségou at Konodimini, Banankoroni, Diammarabougou, Soroba, Massala, Toko, Shouola, Kokou Banankoro, Pelengena, Sama, Kala, Kalabougou, Ségoubougou, and Ségoukoura; and in the various quarters of the capital city. /Bamako/.

Some elements of the material described were gathered for the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire of Dakar.

115 The Bambara who collaborated regularly in the gathering of information are the following.

Dyodo Diallo, son of Zangué Diallo, notable of Ségou.
Mamadou Diara, director of the rural school of Bamako.
Bala Diara, of Banankoroni, farmer, hunter, diviner, chief of the Komo, chief of the Kworé.
Dji Diara, of Soroba, farmer, hunter, healer, chief of the Nama.
Bakonimba Koulibali, of Soroba, farmer, chief of the Komo.
Boï Koulibali, teacher at Konodimini.
Mousa Woulalé, of Pelengena, griot. /minstrel and herald/
Mousa Diara, of Sama, farmer.
Nadyè Dambèlè, of Konodimini, potter.

000 Numerous chiefs, notables, priests, and generally speaking, all those who were sources of interesting information were consulted. We thank them for their collaboration.

We also thank the Governor of the Sudan and the Administrators of the circles of Bamako, Ségou, and Mopti, /xii/ the Director of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire for the facilities they have provided us.

This study was conducted under the direction of Mr. Marcel Griaule whom we thank for his help in the field and for his advice concerning the presentation of the material. We also thank Mrs. de Ganay who has collected some of this material.

/xiii/ Introduction

131 The Bambara tribes which form part of the Mandé group are at present spread out in French Sudan from the 11th to the 14th degrees latitude north and from the 7th to the 11th degrees longitude west. Three groups which have settled respectively in the circle of Issa Ber, in Kaarta, and in the circle of Odienné are noticeably separated from the central group which occupies the shores of the Niger around Bamako and Ségou.

105 The Bambara live in small villages in the savanna; they practice primarily agriculture (millet, digitaria /Fonio/, rice, maize, etc.), but also herding and gardening. The shore dwellers of the Niger are fishermen and live in symbiotie relationships with the Bozo who taught them fishing techniques and who are generally recognized as the first inhabitants of these regions.

173 The Bambara state that they came from Mandé. This region, where the successive capitals of the ancient kingdom of Mali were situated, has long attracted the attention of research workers (1).

1. See J. Vidal, Au sujet de l'emplacement du Mali (ou Melli /on the subject of the Mali site/), pp. 251-268; Le véritable emplacement du Mali /The true site of the Mali/, pp. 606-619. This author designates by Mali I to IV the four villages of Dyélibakoro, Niani, Maninkoura, and Kangaba, which had been successively the royal city. See also Ch. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali /The empires of Mali/, p. 13.

Moreover, it is "the center from which radiated forty-four tribes at present spread out in the area between the Atlantic coast, the Senegal, and the Niger, or to Dahomey" (2). The region indicated above also

2. See D. Zahan. Aperçu sur la pensée théogonique des Dogon /Survey of theogonic thought of the Dogon/, pp. 113-133. This author gives the name of the tribes originating

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[178]

in Mandé. See also S. de Ganay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara /Notes on Bambara theodicy/, pp. 212-213. "In the village of Manin Kaba, there exists what is called the manti bio, 'the vestibule of the Mande,' in which are arranged around the object called pembele twelve seats (sigi yoro) representing the forty-four 'races' of this common hearth."

This origin is well known to the Sudanese, but the number of tribes varies. In the course of the septennial ceremony of Kangaba (see p. 15 note 1) the griot say: "We were forty-eight; through the mixture of the winds, the races came out at the four cardinal points" (an tumbi debe ni seki la, siaw bwora fyẽ nyamile seleke nami).

has the name of Dyéliba and used to be /xiv/ called Toubla. The name of Kaba (1) given by all Sudanese to the ancient capital of Mali

1. The word kaba has its origin in ni ya ka ba ko ye "this is astonishing," an expression currently used concerning the sanctuary and the ritual objects it contains. The Dogon, who claim to originate in Mandé and who have dispersed into the cliffs of Bandiagara from agglomerations to which they had given the name Kani, explain this last term by giving it the meaning of "little Ka." These were, in a sense, relay stations between their original habitat and the one they now occupy. Concerning these migrations, see G. Dieterlen, Les Ames des Dogon /The souls of the Dogon/, pp. 9 ff.

actually designates the village of Kangaba. But the oldest agglomerations known, before Dyéliba (Mali I according to J. Vidal), are situated in the regions of Kri Koroni and Ouanda.

796 In the village of Kangaba a sanctuary, called mande blo "vestibule
778 of Mande," or kaba blo "vestibule of astonishment," is the object of a septennial ritual attended by representatives of all the races /who are/ said to be of the same origin. There ceremony consists in rebuilding the roof of the sanctuary which shelters an object dolin, but only those persons of pure race belonging to the Kéita family (1) and the

551 1. The name of Kéita, for which various etymologies have been found, is that of the founders of the Mandingo empire. Cf. C. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali, p. 31, and L. Tauxier, Histoire des Bambara /Bambara History/, p. 40: "The first kings of Mali lived at Kangaba and were in fact Kéita."

By extension the name of Kéita may be adopted by individuals belonging to one of the tribes originating in Mandé. Thus a Dogon will take on as dyamu Kéita if he comes to live in Mandé. On the other hand, the heraldic device of the Kéita, which relates the high deeds of the Mandingo princes, includes the devices of almost all the tribes said to be of the same origin. This common origin may perhaps throw some light on the institution of regularized name changes observed in Black Africa, a problem which has claimed the attention of some authors; see in particular P. Humblot, Du nom et des appellations chez les Malinke /Names and nomenclature among the Maunke/.

traditional griot of the chiefs of Mandé, the Dyabaté, are authorized to perform the ritual. Only they may penetrate the sanctuary and tread on its soil, which is said to be "heavier and more powerful than all things." (2)

778 2. Kangaba dugukolo ka gri few be.
376 The sanctuary is a round hut provided with two doors, one oriented to the east and the

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346 other to the west, and covered with a thatched roof in which is hidden an object called dolin. The village is surrounded by several sacred places: a sunzun tree to the north; a well to the west; two stones, one (fara fi) situated near the village and the other (fara gwe) on the river's edge.

796 The septennial ceremony is performed at night. Toward evening, the eldest of the Kéita goes secretly to remove the object dolin from the old thatch and hides it. The new roof is made with materials gathered by the descendants of Farako Makan Kegni (straw, bamboo, and fibers) while the women of the same relationship plaster the walls. The Dyabaté griot who will officiate provide themselves with a little stick of sunzun wood about the length of the ring finger with which they will rub their teeth; the twigs must be cut by the elder sister of the chief of the griot who gives her in exchange /xv/ a loin-cloth of eight [801] bands of white cotton and a number of cowries in multiples of 8 such as 8, 480.

The orators who will officiate during the night wear a white cap topped by a band of cotton of the same color and a yellow tunic (wolo) (see p. 20). Sitting inside the hut from which the old roof has been removed, facing east, they spit into a receptacle in order not to soil the ground. The Kéita remain outside the hut on a site marked by stones and covered with gravel collected in the river bed by young men. During the entire night, the griot, each in turn and encouraged by a relative, recite from the devices of all the tribes issued from Mandé. At dawn, they sing as they circle the construction; then the Kéita hoist up the new roof. Next, the elder

196 secretly replaces the object in the new thatch. A white ox is sacrificed at the well.

The information collected on this ceremony is still fragmentary but the color of the clothing worn by those officiating, that of the victim, the number of bands of the loin-cloth, and the number of cowrie shells given by the griot to his sister, the origin of the gravel used as the seat for the Kéita are evidence that we have here a ritual executed under the protection of Faro (see Chap. II)

195 As early as the fourteenth century numerous travelers described the Bambara /xv/as organized into small groups headed by a chief and more or less submitting to the neighboring empires. This state of affairs lasted until the period of the Peul invasion of this region (in the seventeenth century) which founded two kingdoms and created a local aristocracy of mixed Peul and Bambara blood. The first of these kingdoms was that of Ségou, the history of which is partly known (1). The investigations centered particularly in this area; the chief

1. On the history of the Bambara we refer the reader to the well documented volume of L. Tauxier. Histoire des Bambara.

town which was a capital for a long time retains the traces of a well [197] organized legal system and religion. It is also in this area that, according to specialists, the purest dialect is spoken. (2)

2. The children of families sufficiently [556 wealthy to afford it were formerly sent 191] to Ségou to live with affinals in order to learn how to speak well an elegant and pure language.

197 The Bambara dialects belong to the sub-group of Mandingo languages 212 of the Nigero-Senegalese group. (3) The Bambara know certain

3. See A. Meillet et M. Cohen. Les Langues du Monde /Languages of the World/, p. 546.

197 systems of signs and ideograms which may be considered as a sort of
212 writing and the study of which is currently pursued. The system from which all the others supposedly stem, the glã glã zo, has 226 ideograms which, according to informants, summarize the knowledge of the
[802] Bambara (1). On the other hand, the Bamba use a numerical system

1. See. p. 21. This system and two of the ideograms, of which to designates the mash of boiled cereals and by extension nourishment in general, will be the object of a comment by M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen. "Signes graphiques des Soudanais. L'Homme. /Graphic signs of the Sudanese man/." Cahiers d'ethnologie, de géographie et de linguistique, Hermann (in press).

On certain types of writing observed among the Mandé and the Vai, see J. Février, Histoire de l'écriture /The History of Writing/, pp. 528-529.

based on twenty. Moreover, an analysis of the texts collected, some of them quoted in this essay, has brought to light an /xvi/ important number of words which, according to informants, belong to an ancient language of Mandingo origin, now used as liturgical language. It is not within the framework of this essay to present this material or to comment upon it, but it is appropriate to note that the study of this vocabulary would contribute to an understanding of religious thinking among the Bambara.

173 The Bambara have a rather clear idea of their early history and even of their prehistory. They describe their ancestors with precision and know the phases of development of their technology. These premises are necessary to an understanding of their religion which, like the other institutions, is especially linked to this technological development. Moreover, the only observable remains comprise household furniture and utensils, transient but perennial material whose forms and ornamentation indicate the metaphysical principles on which their way of thinking is based.

177 It is appropriate not to neglect those influences which have acted
121 upon the Bambara through their contacts with other Sudanese tribes

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connected since ancient times with the Mediterranean basin (1). The

1. We wish to draw attention to M. P. M. Schuhl's point and his allusion: "The premises which we owe at present to investigations like those of M. Griaule would seem to call for new syntheses and provide curious terms of comparison. Indirect influence from Greek myths on Sudanese mythology is, furthermore, not impossible." Essai sur la formation de la pensée grecque /Essay on the Formation of Greek Thought/, Presses Universitaires de France, 2nd ed., 1949, p. xv.

M. Schuhl recalls, on the other hand, the resemblances proposed by M. A. Jeanmaire, between Greek facts and some African institutions considered as survivals of a proto-Mediterranean civilization (Couroi et courètes), Lille, 1939.

Mali empires, in particular, by encouraging the expansion of Islam have maintained a center in the heart of the Sudan, which has left traces in the social and religious institutions of the Bambara.

However, it is difficult, if not impossible, at the present time to make a historical presentation of this religion or even to consider the problem of influences. We have with us the last phase of this religion and we know its development only through myths which, furthermore, do not make it appear to be a system established very early; it seems to have developed slowly with various additions which were felt and expressed in the myths. On the other hand the present religions of the Sudanese seem national; they form separate entities among the Dogon (2) the Bozo, the Kouroumba /Kurumba/, the

2. See M. Griaule. Dieu d'eau /water god/.

Minianka, the Sonray /Sonhrai/, and the /xvii/ Mossi. However, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that their systematic observation, undertaken a few years ago, has brought to light a common

177 substratum on which each tribe has grafted its original system. The
121 study of this substratum would help define the problem of origins and influences.

After this, we have at our disposal the support of philology and above all the advantage of seeing the Bambara live their beliefs and of discovering their myths in a crude but expressive material as well as in numerous rites. The observations made over a wide field of inquiry serve as the basis for the presentation of this religious system.

114 The Bambara have been for a long time the subject of articles and
121 works, of which we will give below a concise bibliography. The only author who, until now, has attempted to describe their beliefs as a system is L. Tauxier whose study of La Religion Bambara /Bambara religion/ takes into account to a large extent the works of the Abbé Henry and Ch. Monteil. However, through the descriptions of these different observers which are certainly conscientious, this religion appears as a composite of diverse and even inconsistent elements with no apparent link between them. Despite a uniform plan and a laudable absence of preconceived ideas, L. Tauxier has been unable to bring out the fundamental concepts of the people he observed.

In fact, the study of a present-day Negro religion runs into difficulties of various kinds stemming on the one hand from the necessity of going into the field and on the other hand from the largely esoteric character of the doctrine. These circumstances make this study essentially a work of discovery.

Indeed, Bambara religion, like all Sudanese religions, has an exoteric part, quite easily accessible, which observation conducted along scientific lines may reveal in detail. Rules of life admitted by all, beliefs openly professed, and public or private practices may be the object of detailed work. But this religion, like that of the neighboring peoples, rests upon a doctrine whose fundamental principles
[609] are known to elders and initiates who show considerable aversion to confiding in strangers, particularly whites. Such a situation explains the ignorance in which scholarship has remained for so long concerning the religious way of thinking of this people (1).

812 1. The Bambara themselves distinguish between two kinds of knowledge. The first, called doni fyẽma "knowledge (which has) wind" /xviii/ is superficial

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and considered to be "the introduction to beliefs and customs." It belongs to adults who know little of cosmology. On the contrary, the second, called "deep knowledge" (doniya duna or kuru doniya), is restricted to priests, heads of families, elders of both sexes who are versed in "the science of the things of creation." It can only be acquired slowly in the course of successive initiations and through actual instruction which is sometimes diffused during the rites.

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/xviii/ A rigorous method of observation which neglects no detail and which involves the use of close collaboration from the natives has brought forth a system coherent in all its parts and, it may be said, based on a metaphysics hitherto unknown. Taking the Bambara postulates as a point of departure, the sequence of events through the myths, the development of institutions and technology, their operation and the actual destiny of man in the cosmos all unfold in a logical framework.

On the other hand, this system is projected into the concrete in the form of symbols which borrow the most diversified aspects and which play an active role. The symbolism not only penetrates religious life proper by appearing in the sanctuaries, in the cult materials (shapes and sign writing), or during religious ceremonies (times and places, rituals, etc.), but is present in every aspect of secular life and daily behavior.

The metaphysics and the religion of this people offer a structural entity which includes all social, technological, and economic activities. In the following chapters, we shall attempt to clarify these principles and this system. We believe we may safely state that certain inconsistencies or contradictions presented by the religious system as it is described here are not due to Bambara thought—even though it is subtle and based on a dialectic—but to lacunae in the investigation.

/xix/ Organization of the Book

128 In the first chapter of this work we present the myths which form the framework of the religious representations. A deep knowledge of the cosmogony and myths is necessary to understanding the institutions as well as the most current rituals.

The second chapter analyzes the representations, particularly that of Faro, master of the word and holder of life, whose cult is general and who presides at all human activities.

The third chapter approaches the notion of the person and describes in succession the spiritual principles and the body which are dependent upon Faro, then the name, the device, and the taboos which integrate the individual into society. It also examines the dissociation of these various elements at the moment of death.

The fourth chapter summarizes the mechanism of the blood sacrifice, the most important moment of the ritual, which disposes of the elements making up the person as described in the preceding chapter. It also includes the description of the places where the cult is practiced and the original altars of the Bambara.

The fifth chapter deals with the origin, development, and organization of technology such as fishing, hunting, agriculture, weaving, the forge, and pottery, the performance of which is largely ritual in character and which support the religious representations.

The sixth chapter describes individual and family cults as well as those pertaining to the village as a whole. The great religious societies, which group individuals around the altars set up for specific purposes, are also examined. These cults, so different in appearance, bring into play the same representations, and the rituals involve comparable mechanisms of the forces brought into motion.

In the seventh chapter we give a detailed description of a certain number of rituals chosen from the most representative. A predominant place is reserved for those relating more directly to the "person": birth, circumcision /xx/ and excision, initiations, funeral, and ancestor cults. Among others, those concerning refuse, rain, and general rites called "the renewal of the year" are commented upon.

The eighth chapter presents an analysis of several methods of divination which appear as a synthesis of Bambara metaphysics and reflect in very subtle symbolism the entirety of their knowledge.

SYSTEM OF TRANSCRIPTION

104

â,	an in "planche."	ũ /u/,	ou in French
ẽ,	in in "dinde."	ũ,	un in French
ɛ̌,	ě in "jet."	č,	for "tch."
e,	e in "dé."	ǰ,	dj in "djinn."
ɔ̌,	o in "vol."	ñ,	gn in "hargne."
o,	o in "pot."		
õ,	o in "balcon."		

The native words transcribed in roman letters must be pronounced in the French manner.

In some cases, the translation only of Bambara expressions is put between quotation marks in order not to encumber the text. Moreover, this translation is literal in order to remain as close as possible to the Bambara thought even if it results in some awkwardness or turns of phrase difficult to understand.

Chapter 1

MYTHS

773 The myths of the Bambara must be understood as a sum of knowledge, a kind of world view, and not as a sequence of fixed etiological stories. It may be said that they make up a metaphysics which includes a knowledge of the objects of creation as well as a knowledge of the principles of their state and action.

The knowledge of divine things takes its place within this ensemble but does not come first in time. The Bambara deals with creation and the cosmos, conceptualized as an entity peopled with deities, a cosmos of which he himself is the most significant expression. The following texts explain first the origin of creation, secondly the ordering of the perceptible universe, created from the primordial vibration, and finally the creation of originally immortal living beings on the earth molded by Pemba.

Domination of the mundane world and particularly of the human species was first assumed by one of Pemba's metamorphoses, the phallic tree balanza, which lived on blood and assimilated the strength of men. His reign was troubled by severe cosmic disorders provoked by the rebellion of the first-created female, Mousso Koroni. Today men are still subjected to the after-effects of these disorders. However, the fact that the tree abused its power caused Faro to rise up against it and vanquish it. Faro then reorganized the universe by establishing its boundaries and naming and classifying its component elements. On Earth, where death made its appearance due to the curse of the tree, the basis of this reorganization is the principle of duality, the "word" taught to men by Faro who from then on has the master of the Word and of restoring techniques which would, as needs arose, assure subsistence. The reign of Faro, whom henceforth men worshipped, was founded on order and measure and foreshadowed the "future words" which he is to disclose in the course of time.

/2/The sequence of mythical themes presents a structure of the cosmos; space and time; natural and supernatural worlds; categories, numbers, and the notion of the spatial and temporal cohesion of its elements (interdependence of phenomena). It situates the individual (body and spiritual principles) and in the psychological realm, describes

773 the slow evolution of consciousness (concept of pain), judgment (concept of responsibility and guilt), will (concept of the creative effort and work), all of which develop in man with the advent of suffering
[761] and death. Death is felt to be an accident in the working out of the universal order, an accident compensated for in part by the conservation of spiritual principles and their reincarnation in accordance with the fundamental belief in the eternal resurrection of all things. The myth describes the first ritual, the rejuvenation, which ceases with the advent of death but is replaced by blood sacrifice which today is still the central practice of the rites (1).

1. Wherever possible the writer has avoided discussion of the details of myths so as not to distract the reader from the general line of the Bambara world view. But the scholar, in attempting to better understand the collective psychological processes of this people, may profitably study the numerous variant themes found among them.

The myths described below are the framework of the present-day Bambara religion and of the general cults to Pemba and Faro maintained by the people.

Preliminaries of Creation

1. The glã̃ glã̃ zo

772 The Bambara creation myths imply a philosophy of being and of the universe developed from the void, from nothing, fu (2).

[802] 2. This concept is expressed by a sign with the same name which can also be translated by "nothingness" or "zero" and is a part of the Bambara number system. See Fig. 1, No. 11. For a discussion of this sign denoting the continuity and proliferation of creation, see p. 102.

772 This knowledge, derived from the Kéita of Mandé, is called glã̃ glã̃ zo and describes the timeless and primordial state that preceded the stages of creation. The word glã̃ which indicates the original void, connotes at the same time the ideas of movement, awakening, re-awakening, and resurrection; glã̃ is the principle of the inner universal movement of the cosmos and all that composes it. On the other hand, the term implies the idea that creation is continuous /3/ from the moment of its beginning and perpetually maintained in all things as well as in the universe taken as a whole (1).

[197]

1. The word glã̃ belongs to the ancient language. The Bambara term closest to it in meaning is kununi, which means "reawakening, resurrection." Glã̃ is the principle of the eternal resurrection of all things.

Glã̃, "full of its own emptiness and its emptiness full of itself," extended its power everywhere. It sounded "a voice of emptiness" which brought into being its double, dya; glã̃ became two, thus indicating the primordial character of duality, the existential principle (2). The

2. It is said: glã̃ ye lankolo nye, lankolo nye glã̃ ye, glã̃ ye a yere ke lankolo fla ye, lankolo fla ye a yere ke glã̃ ye; "glã̃ is the emptiness, emptiness is glã̃, glã̃ made itself into two emptinesses, two emptinesses made themselves into glã̃ itself."

two gave forth a damp substance, zo zumale, "cold rust," which came out as invisible liquid vapor and formed hard shiny substances (3).

3. glã̃ ye koloya a la ka kr zo ye, boli tumbi kẹ šiši ye bali ye, ka kẹ dyi sumalè ye, ka kẹ zo yele gele ye; "glã̃ made a substance which was rust come out of itself; this emission was invisible smoke which then became cold water, the latter becoming a hard and shiny rust." The informant translated the word zo as "rust."

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And while comparing this matter to the product of oxidation in a metal, once it is released, he describes it as a crystal.

When all was filled with these frozen substances, glã emitted a power, zo ñami, which, rising and descending within itself, produced an inner breath called fyẽ tasuma, "fire of wind." The two glã crossed this vast content and the fire melted the substances (1). At the time

1. "The two glã arose and melted away the voice of glã; creation spoke with the voice of glã"; (glã flã wululila ke, glã kã yeke, dali ye glã kã fo).

of this first fusion "the vast glã gave a place to all things secretly and invisibly" (2).

2. kono glã ye sikiyoro di few be ma, gundo ni blika la. The word "thing," a literal translation of fẽ, is used here in its most general sense.

The two glã then immobilized themselves, "gathering their energy into themselves," and, once more, everything became fixed and frozen. Then, a second time, they melted the substances, as though destroying the preliminary form in order to make another. These movements, called glã gmã, bear witness to the very essence of glã which is the eternal resurrection of all things, and the repetition of the word expresses duality, the basis of creation. At the time of these two successive fusions, the glã fixed "four points," one at the moment of the first melting and the other three in the course of the second, all of which were placed in a state of "immobile action" (3).

3. The informant compares this stage of creation to a hand holding a pencil, the tip of which rests on a sheet of paper. The hand is poised as if to write, but is immobilized. The four points anticipate the cardinal points, beginning with the east (see p. 223).

772 Then glã released within itself a shuttling motion /4/, the repercussions of which gave the elements of the potential universe a soul. This movement also had the effect of situating the elements and of keeping them in place through the force of attraction (mana): "glã has stirred up the elements, they have taken their places, and heat has kept them in place" (1).

1. glã ye few yereyere, u nye, u sikiyoro mine, funteni yu mana. The informant compares this horizontal movement to one which might be applied to a surface pitted with cup-like depressions; the objects of creation, at first strewn about in disorder, would, under the effect of this shuttling movement, each place itself in a hole. Mana is translated as "attraction," or "agglutination," when it is used as a noun. It can also mean "to shed" and may designate the product of the shedding the exuvia; mana is thus a synonym of folo.

At the same time, the contact established between the two glã produced a kind of explosion out of which was ejected "a hard and powerful substance" which vibrated as it descended. Out of this vibration came, one by one, the signs which, attracted by the objects (as yet uncreated but about to be created) to which they gave name, placed themselves on the objects. Thus, each thing acquired its sign and its word, and "obeying the movement of glã," each began to vibrate feebly within itself and in its assigned place.

When all things were thus assigned their places and potentially designated, another element detached itself from glã and placed itself on the objects in order to take cognizance of them: this was "man's foot" (or "the grain of the foot"), a symbol of human consciousness. As this element gained knowledge, it communicated this knowledge to all things which then became conscious of themselves. Thus, all things were designated and named silently before they came into existence, and were called into being by their names and their signs. But they did not know themselves as such except in man's consciousness, the "grain" or principle of the universe.

772 Then all things assembled and began to rumble in order to complete the creation of the universe. The glã remained within themselves and delegated to zo the responsibility of liberating the designated and animated objects which they contained and of which they had created the essence. Zo took possession of them and joined their elements into a huge ball, kuru, called yo yebali, "invisible yo": zo gave yo the principle of the seed and endowed it with attraction and power (1).

1. zo ye kise masa di yo ma, ka samani masa bla la, ka mineni masa bla a la.

Yo was the spirit, more exactly "the thought and action," that was to work out the creation, using the "signed objects" determined by glã.

772 /5/ The glã glã zo is represented by three engravings on wood.
532 The first, glã kele, represents the two glã in the shape of two spirals in opposite directions and with connected points of origin; below this is engraved "the object with four arms" from which issued the signs (2). These signs, 226 in number, are barely sketched out, showing

[524] 2. Today this object is represented by a twig of Acacia albida, called "the wood that separates the signs," ti kla dyiri. Its bark is removed in such a way as to outline the multiplication sign enclosed in an oval representing the world.

that "the creation of glã takes place in the invisible, the unknown, the unrealized." The second, glã dya, is composed of 226 horizontal or vertical lines, the counterparts or "witnesses" of words. The third, glã zo, is an oval divided into seven compartments (a square in the middle and two times three lateral sections) in which the symbolic representations are clearly engraved. In the middle of the central square, there is an oval containing six signs which represent simultaneously "the egg of the world and yo, the creating voice."

772 2. The yo

The creation of the perceptible universe beginning with yo is conceived of as a progression in "thinking," tasi (3). This progression,

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3. From ta (to do, in the ancient language) and si (to act). The Bambara freely translate tasi as "spirit of nothing" and give this stage, originating in nothingness and preceding creation, the name of tasi dyɛ̃, "world of the spirit of nothing."

called oryo or oyo, is broken down into three stages: yo, the inner word, invisible spirit and inaudible voice, potentially containing all creation: o the transition from the inaudible to the audible; [801] yereyereli, the creative vibration (4). The progression is represented

4. The name oyo, given to this system, is a composite of o and yo, and when pronounced reverses the chronological order. This anomaly is recognized by the Bambara who explain it by the fact that yo, designating an inaudible voice, cannot be pronounced before o which designates a perceptible noise. Thus, in reversing the chronological order, yo "remains in the secret of o" which is in accord with its nature.

by seven signs, 7 being the symbolic number of man (homo) "seed of the world." Indeed, this numeral is the sum of 3 (male symbol) and 4 (female symbol). The couple they form is itself the symbol of duality, the fundamental law of creation, since each human being is both male and female in body and spirit (5).

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5. The number 3 represents the penis and two testicles of the male body; the number 4 the four labia of the female body. On the other hand, man and woman are each endowed with two twin souls of different sexes; the soul of sex, opposite to that of its bearer, has its seat in the foreskin or the clitoris until the operation of circumcision or excision is performed. For further discussion of the duality of man and his

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person, see G. Dieterlen, La Personne chez les Bambara /The individual among the Bambara/ and infra, Ch. 3, The Person.

712 It is said that yo, the inner secret voice, "is born of itself, is known by itself, and comes out from itself /6/, out of the nothing which is itself" (1). Out of yo there will come only things that are themselves

1. yo na na a yere la, bwora a yere la, dona a yere la, a be fu la min ya yere ye.

and that will be nothing other than yo. Each thing, being yo, proceeds like yo, only from itself. Hence, man is nothing other than himself, since he is a creation of yo and since yo's creations are by itself. Thus, there is nothing in the world besides oneself, since the person is yo, and yo is entirely contained in the person. As a result, each being is directly descended from yo with no intermediary; it is yo and exists only because it wills it. That is to say, man, the image of yo, alone has the will, alone has the capacity to bring forth action or creation, since these can be nothing but himself. "Who then," say the initiates, " can know himself, make himself known and manifest himself, other than through himself? Who then can manifest anything but himself?"

But yo, being at the origin of the inaudible and invisible things that are itself, is also in the unknown, hence in nothingness. And consequently, the same is true of man who is nothingness and can act only on the nothingness of himself.

Thus, yo, insofar as it was mind, was free in its ability to decide and to use its creative will. Its work, in nothingness, consisted in shedding, "for it was the continuous shedding of the world." When it
772 manifested itself by rotating on itself, it went five times to the four
801 "angles of its thought, " seleke miri, once to the "sky of its thought, " sã miri, once to the "earth of its thought, " dugukolo miri, thus communicating its power to them (2). The realization of this universe,

2. On the meaning of the number 5, see p. 25. Yo has endowed the "angles, " corresponding to the "cardinal angles" in the completed universe, with its greatest

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strength for there the Bambara place the poles of attraction which, in the universe, uphold all bodies. It is said: "All bodies accept the force of attraction of the four angles," fari be bi sõ seleke nuni mana barika la.

which determined "the space of yo in its own thought," is expressed by the number 22: "yo, darkness of creation, in the depth of the secret space of night, master of the foundation of the 22 rotations, great bearer of vibration, great builder of the marrow of bones (1).

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1. yo dali dyibi, su kene gundo tyema, munumunu mu tani fla siki ba, yere done ba, kolow nye kono dlaba, kono being the ancient term for marrow.

This prayer is recited in honor of yo when a woman's pregnancy is first noticed; it is also recited at eclipses of the sun.

These 22 spirals stirred up all that yo contained in spirit; nugu, "entrails, intestines," which carried all things and man within itself; yaĩ, "seed of the air," which placed the voids in all /7/ parts of space"; fayã, "seed of the wind"; sani, "seed of water"; yerẽ, "seed of fire"; yelẽgu, "seed of earthly matter" (2). The rotations of yo

2. fayã, sani, yerẽ (in ancient language), and yelẽgu were at the origin of the four elements, air, water, fire and earth, all of which did not yet exist but were to appear later.

The seven elements composing yo are represented by signs, reproduced in Figure 1 (1 to 7).

put them in order and kept them under the force of attraction (mana). In other words, carried away by this whirlwind, both magnetic and creative, the elements became organized, one in relation to the other; in this way the 22 terms of the universe, as thought out by yo, were determined; these terms are also the 22 periods of its thought:

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1. origin of the west, klebi dyu
2. origin of the east, koro dyu
3. origin of the north, baba dyu
4. origin of the south, bani dyu
5. the sky from above, sã̃ kaba

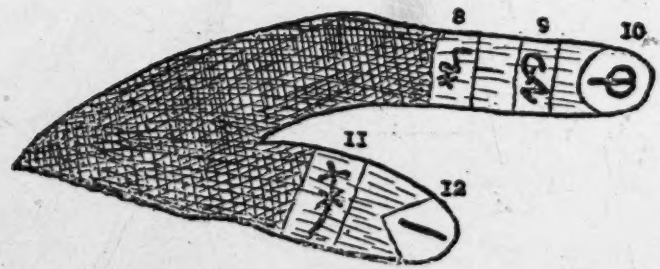

Fig. 1.—Bambara signs. From 1 to 7, signs of yo. From 8 to 12, signs of the king's thumb and index finger, representing the actual world and the future world (drawings by an informant).

6. secret space, tyema gundo
7. earth, dugu
8. center of the earth, kotye dugu
9. eye of the earth, dugu nye
10. mouth of the earth, dugu da (1)

[823]

1. The earth breathes through orifices called "mouths."

11. northwest, seleke se /8/ (literally: foot of the angle)

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12. southwest, seleke bolo (literally: hand of the angle)
13. northeast, seleke (angle)
14. southeast, seleke (angle)
15. sun, kle
16. moon, kalo
17. male star, dolo ke
18. female star, dolo muso
19. mouth or mother of the star, dolo da or dolo ba
20. grain of rain, sã kise
21. secret rain, sã gundo
22. damp rain, sã suma (1).

1. It is said of these times: "yo says only yo above, one should imitate this; the world has moved to the west, the east, the north, the south, " yo bi yo fo sana, ladeke ka kãka kẹ o la, giri kera wa la, ni flaye la, ni kaye la, ni noro la. The terms giri, wa, flaye, kaye, noro belong to the ancient language.

While whirling from the "angles" to the cardinal sides, yo thought out four worlds (2):

2. The four worlds are represented by a drawing made up of four concentric quadrangular figures, observed by the informant in the village of Kéré in Mandé. The Bambara conceive of space as a square with cardinal angles and sides (see p. 55, Fig. 3).

The first, dyẽ mana, "the shedding of the world, " belongs to the time when yo "circulated within himself" in nothingness, and of which it is said: "yo was the shedding of the world; he made himself shed"(3).

3. yo tunye dyẽ mana ye, o tumbi mana a yere la.

The following world, dyẽ gale, "the first world, " is the universe about to be realized, the actual world, and it is said that its symbol

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is 3: "The foundation of the first world was given to all things by yo, these things were constructed at 3." (1) In order to realize the world,

> 1. dyẽ gale sikityoko dira fama yo fẹ few ma, o few ye dlali ke saba la.

yo had to use intermediaries which he created as such, but which were responsible for imperfection since the harmony of all things would have required that creation be directly willed and engendered by yo himself. The first constructed universe is thus 3: yo is 1, the intermediary is 2, the world itself is 3. As a result the whole creation is not equal to yo, for its perfection would have expressed itself by 2, that is to say by yo and the world with no intermediary (2).

> 2. This idea would seem to contradict the principle of yo's identity with all creation. It should be taken to mean that the total work of creation also includes imperfection. The cause of this imperfection is precisely the presence of intermediaries created, so to speak, with this purpose in mind.

On the other hand, it is said that the actualized universe was constructed and perceived at 3, known at 4. When yo decided to create, in period one, nothing could know it, since it alone moved in the nothingness in which it placed its energies. When these energies united, they formed a new unity which, added to yo, made 2, that is to say the period two which was as yet unknown. These energies grew slowly heavier while "resisting in attraction," that is, ordering themselves. This was /9/ period three and things became perceptible. But not until period four did they become clearly known, that is, man became conscious of them. As a result, masculinity (symbol 3) in nature is considered the original stimulus in determining fertility. The fulfillment of fertility and the complete knowledge of it can only be accomplished through femininity (symbol 4).

But yo, being perfect, wanted perfection, and in attempting to achieve it, wished to reach 5. For this purpose, he went beyond universe 3 and reached 4. Since numbers were already the symbol of

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801 things and (so to speak) the things themselves, 4, representing femininity, could not create by itself, for 4 does not exist in 3, symbol of masculinity. And in the universe as thought out by yo, nothing can be engendered without the help of complementaries or twins, whose prototype is the couple: masculinity-femininity.

World 4 is called dyɛ̃ bana, "the refused world," for, in the face of difficulty, yo kept that creation within itself; it remains there as a potential and will return into the world called dyɛ̃ nata, "the world to come," in which, reaching 5, yo will achieve a universe not in 3, like the actual one, but in 2 (yo and the world), without an intermediary. Hence its perfection, for it will be equal to its creator. This universe will be created in the opposite direction of the preceding one in the following order: south, north, east, and west. It will be established by the "great voice of one word" and characterized by the transformation of beings, a new distribution, the absence of error, a close contact with the essence of things, and perfect knowledge. For it is said: "In the world to come, all words will be changed. Solidity was not achieved in this creation, but union will be accomplished in the solidity of one word. Yo's course, yo's work, yo's sleep will penetrate every being. The second world is a new world, the world of one word" (1).

1. Dyɛ̃ nata la, kumaw be bi yelema; sikityoko ma kle dali ko la fara mugã na kɛ kuma dyotyoko kele nye; yo boli, yo bara, yo suna, bi dõ ma be la; dyɛ̃ fla ye dyɛ̃ kura ye, dyɛ̃ kura ye kuma kele nye.

This text is sometimes recited in the course of talks which follow religious ceremonies, and at times when the movements of creation are discussed. Many details of rituals and games indicate this preoccupation with a second universe. See Fig. 1, p. 22 and Fig. 4, p. 56.

Because yo has only constructed the first universe, men understand only half of its thought, the other half to be realized in the "second world."

772 801 After having thought out the universe and rotated upon itself to create the universe, yo "divided and distributed its Word." It placed three times 22 voices /10/ in o, which then entrusted one time 22 voices to yereyereli, out of which the finally conceived universe was to come forth. This deposit in o is none other than the change of the inaudible voice, yo, into an audible voice. When that voice began to sound outside of yo, still invisible and secret, the latter stopped moving and remained motionless within itself: o, in its sound, is the emissary of yo. And in that voice all things necessary to the building of the universe were proposed; all these things also potentially rumbled across the "angles of the world." When this primary movement reached its heighth, the yereyereli, the vibration, issued from it, and when the vibration existed and was shed, o stopped rumbling but was itself the spirit of movement: it is said: "yere came forth from o, o was its foundation" (1).

1. yere bwora o la, o kera siki kele nye a ko.

772 Yo being the immense and inaudible voice, o became the rumbling voice; finally yereyereli, the high-sounding vibration, formed the rays of light in space. The whole of the infinite trembled, shone, and resounded. After the yereyereli had filled space with movement, light, and sound, it ask o for its power and became "pregnant," bearing all it wanted and had to create: "The vibration had the power of attraction, the creator was secretly within it" (2). The present uni-

2. Yereyereli tunye mana ma ye, daliba tumbi a kono gundo la.
The Bambara imagined that the light and sound of this vibration were such that they were intolerable to vision and hearing; however, even though man cannot perceive the vibration, it exists nonetheless; "the egg of the world continues its vibration in sound and light."

verse issued from the vibration, provoking "astonishment," koni, a term used to designate both the yereyereli and the creative principle it contained (3).

772 3. On koni, see S. de Canay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara, pp. 188ff.

Creation of the Universe

772 773 At the center of yereyereli was the spirit, miri, in the spirit was the doing, wali; in the doing was the coming of all things, nali; and in nali was the division of all things, tali. These four terms also define the four basic elements of creation, respectively air, earth, fire, and water; air and fire being male, earth and water, female. (1)

1. "yereyereli was originally made up of four elements which enabled it to vibrate secretly," (yereyereli gale gale kono kera ni wale nani ye, o ya to a sera ka yereyereli su a la).

The miri was also "the egg of the world in which nature was enclosed." It is represented by three ovals, all contained within each other; this figure also expresses the three /11/ rotations made by yereyereli at each of the cardinal points (in the following order: north, south, east, west), each rotation stirring up the four elements (2). The central oval, or so de, "son of the house," is the primordial

[801] 2. See Fig. 2, p. 34 . Creation is thus expressed by the numbers seven and 12, obtained by the addition and multiplication of three (male symbol, and number of rotations) and four (female symbol and number of elements). Seven is the symbol of man (homo) and of the principle of the universe; 12 is the symbol of the multiplication of beings and of the perpetual development of this universe.

grain which placed all things in the nature of the four elements. The intermediary oval, dyẽ wali gale, "the first action of the world,"

represents fertility; it determines man, the principal thing of the universe, who has also received from it the capacity for thought and knowledge. The external oval, dyẽ ko, "gate of the world," is essentially mobile; rotating upon itself, it dilates or contracts, depending upon the births or deaths of the multiple-formed matter it contains. It is this oval that makes all things in the universe "unable to escape from the sight of the creator" (1).

1. few be dyele ngala ka yeli kono.

The essential part of that which the yereyereli stirred up as it rotated was the spirit. The spirit, inflated by all its potential power, finally began to sound. "The spirit resounded in the midst of facts," (2) and as it was the strongest element in space, it held itself up alone

2. miri ye manga ti walew tyela.

and arose. Then it burst and from it poured elements which slowly separated, dispersed, and ordered themselves. It is said of this event: "In the old days, all things came out together" (3). These fundamental

3. folo kow bõñuana.

elements, numbering twenty-two, are at the origin of creation which is classified into twenty-two categories.

The Bambara use several methods to order and name these elements. First, according to the fundamental system of creative thought, yo, they divide the elements into three groups of seven, to which a twenty-second is added.

The first seven, dyẽ dyo kã gale, "the first voice of the building of the world," express yereyereli before knowledge, but containing all things with man, "seed" of nature, in the first place. The seven following elements, dyẽ dyo kã saba "the third voice of the building of the world," denote the beginning of the knowledge of yereyereli as masculinity and assures all fertility. It is at this moment that the term koni appears, attributed to yereyereli, and expressing awe before creation. The last seven, dye dyo ka nani "the fourth voice of the building of the world," contains "the complete revelation of the dispositions and situations /12/ of all that was created";

772 yereyereli then becomes known as femininity and assures the supremacy
801 of femininity over nature. The twenty-second element sums up these
773 three groups of seven and expresses total knowledge (1).

> 1. The same progression of numbers as in the creative thought yo, characterizes the creation by vibration. Being 1, the vibration passed on to 2. At 2, it conceived invisible "light air" and the powers it contained were grouped together to form a whole. At 3, the powers became gravity, and the visible "heavy air" appeared. At 4, and only at that moment, creation, completely visible, was revealed to the consciousness. For further discussion of the "heavy air," see also S. de Ganay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara, p. 188.

Another division of the elements determines the categories. The first seven are the bõnuana of which it is said: "The seven bõnuana came out first" (2). Then came twelve bangini, births or bayeremani

> 2. Bõnuana wolo fla bwora folo. The word bõnuana means literally "come out together."

"discoveries," of which it is said: "Twelve discoveries were left in space" (3). After them, there appeared three ǰiginis, foundations or

> 3. Bangini tani fla bla ka kɛnɛ da.

dyoli, situations, of which it is said: "Three foundations ate up the world" (4). The first seven elements are the "states of the world";

> 4. ǰigini saba ye dyɛ̃ dũ̃.

the next twelve, "the foundations of the world"; the last three, "the words of the world's situation" (5).

> 5. dyɛ̃ dyo tyoko; dyɛ̃ sigi tyoko; dyɛ̃ dyo ka.

772 The seven bõnuana summarize the general characteristics of beings
80/ and things:
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1. kelẽña, unity;
2. makari, pity, mercy;
3. mako, necessity;
4. sinaya, aggression, jealousy;
5. fadena, rivalry;
6. maloya, shame;
7. sia, race, species, stock.

The twelve bangini, which follow, determine the qualities and destinies of the person:

1. ma ye ma ye, literally: a person is a person; gifts, possibilities of each, propositions and dispositions.
2. mako, mutual aid, simplicity, dignity, courtesy, wisdom.
3. sebaya, power, domination.
4. dyuguya, maliciousness, vulgarity, ferocity, difficulties.
5. kunanguya, bad luck, bad destiny, ill nature.
6. sira, road, guide, obedience, discipline.
7. ɲafola, wealth, health, fertility.
8. adamadẽña, brotherhood, humanity, liberty, kindness.
9. dahirime, food, material possessions.
10. saya, death, illness, infirmities, madness.
/13/ 11. ɲu, night, light and dark, secret, witchcraft.
12. kle, day, sun; all the boli altars of the Bambara.

The three jijini are respectively:

1. kun, the head that thought out the world.
2. ba, the womb that formed it.
3. fo, the word that created it.

772 Knowledge, fã̂, was born of three foundations which finally became
773 detached from the spirit (1). Knowledge opened up, divided, and

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1. The following prayer, relating to the fã̂, is sometimes recited: fango, ma dua, ma bo, fẽ̂ mbina, fẽ̂ nkumba, fẽ̂ ndaba, fẽ̂ semba, wolo tigi ye nye, djiri tigi ye nye, panve bwora na. O bwora mi, o nya nyimi senge do. Ntigi ye yereyere ye, ka bo miri kono, miri dane sandyi.

782 "Road of knowledge, I am not small, I am not big. A thing arrives, a thing with a large head, a large mouth, a large foot. I am the master of fertility; I am the master of trees. Where does it come from? It comes from the weariness of my seed. My master is the vibration, out of which came the spirit, the rain of which fertilizes."

772 773 contributed to the building of the visible world, especially engendering particles, moŋo moŋo, which entered into the composition of the earth, and a radiance, noro, used for the formation of the sky.

At the same time, the spirit let fall upon the earth (still in the process of formation) a heavy object in the form of a globule, kulu, which was later named pemba (1). Pemba, moving as a whirlwind to

1. From fɛ̃, thing and ba, big.

the four cardinal points (south, west, east, and north), received twelve of the elements issued from the spirit. Then, with the help of the particles that came out of fã̀, he modeled lumps and mounds which gave shape to the earth.

But in the course of rising, the spirit had thrown upwards that which was later called fã́ro (2). Faro, who was then no more than vibration,

192 2. The Bambara use either faro or fã́ro, from fa (creation) or fã́ (knowledge) in the ancient language. This double etymology indicates the closeness in their minds between the concepts of creation and knowledge (see p. 17). The suffix ro expresses the idea of a whole, a totality. Another etymology has been suggested by S. de Ganay, in Notes sur la théodicée bambara, p. 196. "... the words Fané (the name of a family of blacksmiths), Faro, fan (force), fara (stone), and fari (body) all have the same origin. Faro is the secret name of stone." This etymology

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is interesting in that it accentuates the ties which, in the Sudan, bind the Faro of the Bambara and the Bozo, the Nommo of the Dogon, and the blacksmiths. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau (passim).

772 helped the spirit with ten of its elements and with the radiance from
773 fā to build the sky along an oriented trajectory. Faro first went to the west, then the south, the east, and the north, thus determining the celestial cardinal points.

/14/ The sky is distinct from empty space, kene, which separates it from the earth and which is the product of the "yereyereli's shedding after it had given birth to the spirit." The sky, composed of seven parts placed one above the other, was completed before the earth which itself is also made up of seven corresponding parts.

773 Although he had received the larger share of the elements disgorged by the spirit, Pemba could not finish his work alone. When the sky was completed, the spirit blessed Faro, precipitated him in the form of water along the trajectory followed by Pemba during his descent. This water fell drop by drop from the seventh part of the sky to the seventh part of the earth into which it streamed to gain knowledge of the earth's foundations. As Faro descended vertically, he left a globule in space which became the spirit of the air, Teliko (1); on earth, he

1. From teli, to go quickly.

deposited a particle which formed the spirit Soba (2). As he dripped

2. Literally: so, house, ba, big.

between the mounds which made up the earth, he saw that the latter was not completed, so he filled the empty pockets with water, thus forming the hidden springs of today.

Then life appeared on earth. Faro, impregnated by the vibration which was potentially masculine and feminine, gave birth to twin daughters on a deserted hillock (3). As soon as they appeared, the

[823] 3. Naked hillocks, walawala, and clearings are the scene of rituals concerning the twins.

773 first grass, yayalé (1), grew around them, and scorpions, entrusted

1. Andropogon (Hyparrhenia) hirtus.

with protecting the twins, came forth (2). After a time, an abundant

2. The scorpion, weapon of the twins, attacks those who would harm them, for to attack a twin would be to offend Faro.

dew that had collected spread over the hillock and formed a spring from which a stream began to run. At its head, the fish kokoni (3)

3. Calrias senegalensis.

appeared, directing the first flow of fresh water to run on earth. He was soon followed by another fish of the same species which took Faro and his children on its back; the stream carried them to their water homeland. The first of Faro's daughters gave birth to twins, one of whom was a male. Faro sent his messenger, the swallow, to place the soul or vital force of the twins in the birth waters. As evidence he kept their doubles, dya, in water in order to protect them against all evil. Of these twins the Bozo were born, and, like Faro's twin daughters, they could live in water and converse with him (4). Faro

4. The male twin mated with his sister who gave birth to the Bozo; the daughter mated with a man descended from Mousso Koroni (see p. 65).

then created the fish /15/, which served as food for them, the crocodilians, and all the aquatic animals that people the seas and the running waters. Then he returned to the sky.

Of this first creation of earth and sky, it is said: "Pemba descended on earth; Pemba was the builder of all things. Faro's evidence came forth and spread over it; the great water (of Faro) descended and entered the eyes of the earth: in these places Faro made known his power" (5).

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5. pemba djigi na dugukolo ka, pemba dlala fẽwnye, faro ka sereya bwora o la, dyi ba djigini dona dugukolo nyena, yoro min faro ye a sebaya do o la. This text is recited in the course of the annual ceremonies of the Kworè (see p. 217).

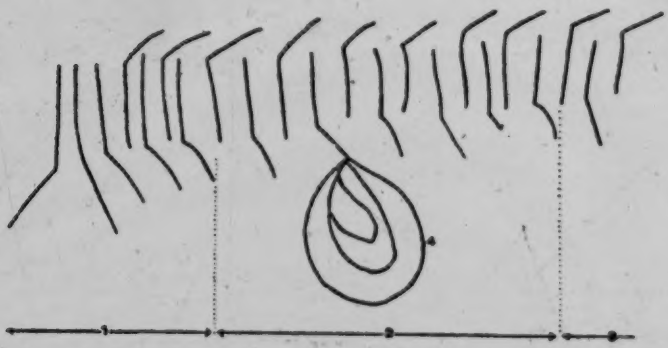

Fig. 2.—The twenty-two elements issued from the explosion of the spirit (4). They are divided into seven bõñuana, twelve bangini (2) and three jijini (3). This drawing was made on the sanctuaries of Komo. (An informant's drawing).

The first phase of the formation of the world is commemorated each year by a drawing traced on the sanctuary of the Komo: it represents the spirit, miri, and the twenty-two elements of creation (Fig. 2). The vertical lines are read from left to right; they are bent alternately above and below to indicate that they belong alternately to Pemba and Faro, and also signify that each of the elements is the first of a series engendered by it. The miri is drawn in the center in the shape of a slanted pocket, the image of "yereyereli's pregnancy." The old man in charge of the ritual recites as he draws: "Pemba and Faro have situated and organized the world, the sky above was secretly made by Faro with the help of the spirit; Pemba descended on earth and was known very quickly; the humans ask your help, yereyereli, my two hands are behind my back" (1). /16/

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1. pemba ni faro ye dyɛ̃ dyokã̀ ani dyɛ̃ dyotyoko kɛ, sankaba dlala faro fɛ gundola miri deme ni ko la, pemba djigini dugukolo ka, a dõ teli yala, dyobe na warilike yereyereli, mbolo fla yenko.

Pemba's Reign

For seven years, Pemba was a whirlwind (1). Transformed into a

1. This part of the myth concerning the pembele was collected by S. de Ganay and published in the Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique under the title: "Aspects de mythologie et de symbolique bambara. /Aspects of Bambara Mythology and Symbolism/." We have made a few changes in the text.

acacia seed, he moved about in space, carried by the wind and entraining the rain; finally, exhausted, he came to rest on the earth which hid him under a few lumps of dirt and enabled him to germinate; a tree, the balanza (2), grew but soon died of drought. There re-

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2. Acacia albida. The Dogon give an equally important place to the acacia albida in the prelude of creation. The first materialization of the world rotated between two thorns of the tree, placed symetrically point to point. Its shape was that of a rotating, flattened out truncated cone made from the wood of the same tree.

mained no more than a sort of rectangular board lying on the bare earth. It was called pembele, also ko kun, "the head of things."

Pemba was alone on the earth in the shape of a tree root which potentially contained the creation of animals and plants. Beneath

T13 him his own decomposition collected. As he occasionally moved about in a whirlwind, weary of his solitude, he said to himself one day: "The dust of my tracks will dissipate my nostalgia." Having spoken these words, his tracks came together and the wind pushed them towards the mound of earth and rotting wood. He kneaded this mass with his saliva, thus incorporating into it a breath-soul, ni; he gave it a shape and an immaterial double, dya. However, as he distrusted it, he turned the double over to Faro, master of sky and the waters, guardian of the dya. Then Pemba laid himself down upon the shape for four days. On the fifth day, he heard, coming from beneath him a high-pitched feminine voice which said: "Get up, I am exhausted." "No," he replied, "first I will give you a name so that you may be my wife."

This creature had a head with long, pointed ears and the torso of an animal; the rest of the body was human except the tail. Until her fall, she retained that shape.

In order that she might become the womb of future beings, the repository of knowledge and the stimulant to Pemba's thoughts, she had to assure him of her total love. She promised him this and thereupon received the name of Muso koroni kundye, "little old woman with a white head,"—little, for she had issued from him; old, for she was an emanation for him and therefore his equal in age; white, /17/ because, coming from him, she was as pure as he. Thus named, she got up and became his wife. Although he did not enter her, she received multiple inseminations from him and in exchange he took his own sap back. She gave birth to plants and animals, the first of which was the panther. All that she engendered had a soul or vital force, ni, and a double, dya, similar to those which Pemba had deposited in her as he kneaded her with his saliva. At that time, no being was articulated (1).

1. Such beings with supple, non-articulated limbs are called masibadé.

T13 824 The earth began to swarm with beings who appeared without order as they were born at random; they all went to worship Pemba as their creator, calling him god, Ngala. The latter wished to assert his complete domination over this chaotic work /of creation/; so he asked Mousso Koroni to plant him in the earth. He immediately took

773 root by his own power and became the first of all trees, the balanza,
824 green in dry season and dry in rainy season, and it extended his power (1).

1. The balanza is not Pemba in his totality, which is spirit, force, and matter. It is Pemba's earthly metamorphosis and, more especially, the image of his fertile masculinity. Pemba took the shape of the balanza in order to continue his work of creation and to bring death on the earth.

773 The human beings born of Faro lived amidst the burning rocks and sought refuge under that tree, whose power was obvious to all since it needed no water to keep it green. They prayed to it and received from it directives for their lives. Since they were immortal, time did not exist. However, they figured their age according to their pilosity: at age 12, the public hair grew; at 22, the hair under the arms; at 36, the beard was black; at 52, the hair whitened. When he could count the four types of hair, his being was complete; but seven years later, he suddenly grew thin and lost his vitality, and his soul weakened; he was then an old man.

Men at that time knew no language and had no clothes. They lived naked and communicated to each other through gestures and grunts. At the instigation of Mousso Koroni, and in order to recognize
[801] each other, they scarred their face with three or four lines, three being the sexual symbol of man (the penis and two testicles) and four that of woman (the four labia). In keeping with this, each person, according to his sex, would repeat his actions three or four times.

Men at that time received their food from /18/ the sky, thanks to the spirit Téliko, who, up in space, watched over Faro's waters. During the rainy season, he would send them stones from the seventh heaven containing karite nuts, si kolo. From these stones the women extracted oil which they ate with fruit. One day, during the dry season, a woman who had drawn oil from four nuts wiped her hands on the balanza under which she was seated alone. "This, I want," said the tree. From then on, all the women offered him oil and were imitated by men who later partook of the cult.

However, the balanza was no longer satisfied with only Mousso Koroni. It demanded that all the women give it their love. Therefore

113 they all had to mate with it, thus increasing its vitality and power, for it fed on their sap just as it had with its first female. The latter became overpowered by jealousy and brought ill will into all things; she refused to share and no longer came near it, thus denying it the love and faithfulness she had promised. She betrayed it, isolated herself, and, refusing to cooperate in the work of creation, began to disturb it. This was the origin of her fall, her poverty, and her hardship for the balanza cursed her for her betrayal and rejected her whenever she attempted to go back to it.

She then knew such nostalgia and despair that a kind of madness seized her. She chased about the heavens, the space, and the earth from west to north, from south to east, plunging pieces of wood into the ground as she had done for Pemba in the hope that they in turn would become balanza.

Mousso Koroni had maimed herself on the pembele at the time she had sexual relations with it. In the course of her voyage, she wished to inflict the same wounds on others; her fury drove her to circumcise and to excise all the human beings she encountered with her teeth and nails. The violence of her actions caused in her the appearance of the first menses. (1) At the same time, she revealed to men all

> 1. Dyoli tumbi bo muso koroni, bolokoli gale ke to a fe na ni ma sone ye. "Blood came out of Mousso Koroni the moment she circumcised with her nails and teeth."

that Pemba had taught her and which should have remained secret; she communicated to all she touched the impurity of her betrayal. At her touch, the earth became impure and has remained so until today (2).

> 2. See p. 82.

Pemba vainly pursued Mousso Koroni throughout the universe in an attempt to reclaim that which he had given her: power and /19/ knowledge. Faro, at his request, chased her in turn from east to south, from north to west; he caught up with her, vanquished her, and attempted to submit her to her creator. But she refused, declared herself free, and thus introduced disorder into creation: evil, unhappiness, and death were brought into the world by her.

113 After a long life of misery and madness, Mousso Koroni died, abandoned and anguished, without ever having seen the light. But men gained something from her misery: her efforts to keep from starvation with the origin of the agricultural techniques that she taught (1).

1. The part of the myth pertaining to the origins of agriculture will be related in detail by S. de Ganay, in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture chez les Bambara, /Agricultural Techniques and Rituals among the Bambara/, (in press).

During that time, life was multiplying on earth; the tree engendered beings with each of the women with whom it mated.

In the meantime other beings appeared on earth—spirits of the air who had become visible, having acquired bodies and become transformed, through contact with the impure earth, into men called mahalakillen (2). They had supple inarticulated limbs and were

2. Literally: fallen person.

similar to the beings brought into the world by Mousso Koroni Koundye. But the multiplication of living beings it wanted to dominate caused the balanza to seek an increase in its own strength, drawing it first from the genital secretion of women. As this became insufficient, a more powerful sustenance was revealed to it. An old man who was to marry a virgin one day lost his strength and could not consummate the sexual act. The young girl mated with the tree, which, having deflowered her, was covered with blood and became warm. The purpose of this warmth was to repel those women who had previously presented themselves to it; it signified that the tree wanted something besides their genital secretion. Seized with fear, women practices divining rites in order to learn its wish: the answer was that it wished blood.

The men, not knowing how to satisfy its desire, asked the eldest among them, who was a diviner, to put the dried blood of the virgin into the tree trunk. He first dampened the stained spot with water and rubbed the tree. On the third day, as he was doing this work,

113 one of his hands caught on the rough bark; a vein in his wrist opened and his blood ran. After this, men offered the blood of their veins twice a year to the tree which would absorb the strength to regenerate itself. In exchange for this offering, the tree agreed to rejuvenate men when they reached the critical age of fifty-nine. But, in return, the tree required that the wives of all men become his wives. /20/ The power of the tree and the youthfulness of men resulted from this continuous exchange, but it was possible only through the medium of those women who were used as a tribute.

The first blood offering of men took place at the begging of the dry season. Grouped around the tree, with the eldest in command, they opened the veins of their right wrists without murmur or complaint and in the midst of chants, they sprinkled the trunk with blood. To give the blood of the right hand meant to give half of one's body and to entrust to the tree one's work and one's double, dya. As soon as the blood stopped spurting, that is, as soon as it seemed to have lost its strength, the wrists were bound with fibers of da, and the wounds healed without leaving any scars.

The stain of each offering was noted by the elder who learned to identify people according to the color of their blood. Then each man, his hands behind his back, licked the place he had bled in order to take back the blood to which the tree had given new life, leaving in the trunk the strong and dangerous element it previously contained.

During this ceremony the old men who wished to regain their youth assembled around the tree. Each one, in turn, climbed to the top and opened the veins of his left wrist, thus surrendering his last strength. Then he climbed down and the young men who were present pulled out the hair of his body, one by one, beginning with the public hair and continuing with the hair of the underarm, the beard, and the head. They finished off by taking out the body hair. The man who endured this was not to groan or cry out, but to sing in order to give himself courage, because suffering stoically borne was necessary to rejuvenation. His entire body was then beaten by the young men, the beating started with the nape of his neck; he fainted and became once more a seven year old child. The adolescents blew into his veins to activate his lungs and insufflated him with water so as to replace the blood he had lost.

The eldest son of the rejuvenated old man became the head of the family but could not inherit the women who, according to the pact,

113 belonged to the tree. In addition, the balanza required that the fourth daughter born in each family be entirely consecrated to it. Every virgin had to be deflowered by it on the eve of her marriage, and the act was ritually performed with the hand of one of the women belonging to the tree in such a way that the blood would run onto the trunk.

The cycle of births that followed these various matings was regulated as follows: when a woman's husband reached the age of /21/ fifty-two, she continued to have sexual relations with the tree. She gave birth to all sorts of animals and plants. After her rejuvenation, which occurred without ritual or suffering when she reached her fifty-ninth year, she regained her virginity (1). She was deflowered by the

1. It would seem that women obtained rejuvenation in return for their genital secretion and menstrual blood which they constantly gave the tree.

tree and gave birth to an animal or a plant, after which, having reunited with her husband, she would again engender men. When her husband grew old, she returned to the tree and the cycle began again.

The tree also demanded of women their menstrual blood and all births took place near it. When men learned to work stone and made their first axes, the tree ordered them to carve wooden phalli which they inserted into its trunk. The shape given to these objects varied according to a woman's vagina and age. The women feared these painful matings but had to submit to them without a tear, because the tree drew not only its strength from them as in the old days, but also a pleasure unknown to it before. Its strength grew still greater and its pleasure reached a peak when the balanza received the blood of the first virgin deflowered by one of the wooden phalli.

When the blood sacrifices were organized, the tree instructed men in other things. It taught them, in particular, to make fire by rubbing two stones together; to thank it they cut the veins of their right hands and gave it their blood.

The power of the balanza was then at its height. But the way in which it abused its creatures brought about its downfall. Indeed, at that time, men as well as women were not only exhausted from giving blood, but, because of a constant increase in population, they were dying of hunger. One evening a woman fainted as she passed by

773 a field of wild tomatoes. When she came to Faro, who was then in the earthly waters, suggested to her the idea of eating fruit. In her body, the fruit was transformed into blood and she regained her strength and got up. She went to bathe in the Niger, a region where famine had become so bad that sand was the only food. There Faro seized her, sliced off her nose and her navel, and opened her belly. He ate the red pulp which he found there. He counted the seeds of the fruit and found the number to be a multiple of seven. Each /22/ tomato carried within it both blood and the principle of duality (3 plus 4), both of these being the fundamental elements that made up the human being. Faro placed the principle of life in the tomato: men and women, informed of this transformation, ate the fruit to regain strength and continue feeding the balanza which, in return, rejuvenated them.

But Faro was opposed to this increase in power. He found it unfair and excessive that the tree enjoy both the domination of the world and sexual pleasure. He also considered the tree his tributary to some extent since water and the tomato, both of which belonged to him, were indispensable to the life of men and to the regeneration of their blood. He therefore made the tree understand the conditions under which he would continue to dispense water. He demanded that the tree stop the procreation of beings through women's mating with wood, and reserved for himself the power to procreate with the tomato as intermediary.

The balanza knew it was going to be vanquished; it foresaw that men were going to betray it and that their worship would now be given to Faro since water was essential to their subsistence and to the multiplication of plants. It knew also that this betrayal would bring about death, but that Faro would take over in his name the work of creation.

Nevertheless it uprooted itself and went to meet with Faro. "The struggle was as bitter as their words, as hard as their hatred," but victory was Faro's.

Death

The women of the vanquished, who gave birth to the animals and plants, were the first to leave it after seven days and it called them back in vain. They went to live near the river; thereafter, without

773 intervention of any kind, they gave birth after drinking water in which Faro had secretly mixed tomato juice. They offered thanks by giving him three or four tomatoes, depending upon the sex of the child.

After the women, the men, too, gave up worshiping the tree. Instead of seeking wood elsewhere, as they had been in the habit of doing, they began to burn the twigs that fell under the balanza in order to maintain their fire, the fire it had given them.

The tree cursed them. They were thus preyed upon by illness and bad feelings: vindictiveness, hatred, jealousy. The wounds they /23/ inflicted upon themselves in order to give blood and regain their youth no longer healed and became infected.

773 A few among them tried to remedy this new state of affairs. Eight
825 of the eldest men went up to the balanza and, in spite of the heat it gave off in order to repel them, they made incisions on their tongues and offered it their blood. The tree was surprised and first gave out a sort of sigh, for it appreciated the sacrifice. Finally it spoke to them and announced the coming of death. But because of their submission and the sacrifice they had consented to, it transformed them into birds, tatugu kononi (literally: little birds of fire). In order to accomplish this, it demanded that they rub their backs against the tree trunk until all their blood was gone. The men cried out in pain in the process, but just as they were about to die, their souls were transformed into birds. Their flesh and skin penetrated into the tree; their bones mingled with the white bark and the marrow became the red fruit which, from that day on, ripened on the tree. Since that time, the "human flesh" which is the wood of the balanza is rarely put to profane use. These first eight elders transformed into birds were subsequently venerated by men (1).

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1. In particular by all blacksmiths. Since their transformation the birds tatugu kononi supposedly live near the balanza and respect a certain number of taboos: they must not separate but must live communally outside of villages. They are responsible for fire; though incapable of lighting it, they have the power, by their very presence, to keep it up or to put it out. A twig of damp

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825 straw bursts into flames when one lights it while pronouncing their name. They also protect woman potters against burns. They are considered impure because of the earth in which they dig holes and because of the fire which is itself impure.

773 As the tree blossomed and bore fruit, the sacrifices, of which it was still the object, increased its yield: leaves and fruit contained the blood of men. The latter began to eat the fruit for it was appetizing and sweet. They also cut branches to feed their animals. The tree remained silent.

But soon men took advantage of it. One man climbed to its summit, cut off all its buds, and carried them away. Those who came afterwards were terrified to find the tree mutilated. The culprit was terrified by his own action and ran away to Mandé, but there the avenging force (nyama) that pursued him caught up with him and he dropped dead.

The people of Mandé, not knowing that they had broken a taboo and being ignorant of death, sheltered him, thinking he was asleep. They tried to feed him and rubbed the corpse with sorrel and oil. Thanks to these ministrations the body /24/ kept for a certain time, but at the end of ten days, it rotted. The force (nyama) it exuded attacked other men who in turn also died.

The deceased's parents came to fetch the body. They ate the flesh because since the arrival of death, the thunder stones that fell from the sky no longer contained karite nuts and they were beginning to starve. They carried away the dead man's bones.

When they returned to the tree, it ordered them to grind the bones and rub its mutilated branches with powder. It told them that from then on it would be useless to give it their blood; they would no longer be rejuvenated and they would all know death.

At the sound of these words, three men fell; four women who unexpectedly came by suffered the same fate. The seven corpses rotted around the tree that had taken their lives. This was the last sacrifice.

The tree announced that it was forsaking men but that it would continue to give the red fruit representing their blood poured over him in the past. And since then, the tree follows an annual cycle contrary to that of other plants: during the winter season it loses its

773 strength along with its leaves and fruit. But it blossoms in the dry season, after the harvest, just like a well-fed person who is afraid of nothing because the harvest is in. As it carries within itself its own sacrifices, it requires nothing of human beings.

After having been forsaken, men in desperation went up to a torrent to implore the invisible. But for two years they received no answer. They began to waste away and their patriarch went up to the tree to obtain its forgiveness. He prayed in vain and had to return to the water. Thereupon he heard the voice of Faro and the power of that first word caused him to faint. A little water brought him back to consciousness but he was terrified by a black shadow. Reaching out with his arms he prayed: "The tree has put darkness between you and us!" Then the shadow became white and the coolness of Faro entered his body. He went to fetch his people and Faro instructed them, saying: "I will give the necessary rain for farming, as well as the springs, the ponds, the torrents, and a great river, the Niger. But remember that all water is holy and must be revered. I cannot eliminate death, but I will compensate for it." And he taught them speech and their own language.

Faro said to the first of the eight oldest men, a patriarch thereafter known as kumabana (1): "You are going to die." Eight /25/ days

1. "End of speech." This word also means "there are no more words" in the sense of "outside of these words there are no others." Kumabana had complete knowledge.

later the old man, feeling his end near, went to the edge of the torrents and said to those who surrounded him and who listened respectfully:

"We did not have the power of speech; through Faro, we have received it. And now we must die. I did not expect this suffering, this sadness: all of you will know the same."

An old man questioned him; he no longer responded. Thinking that they might bring him back to life, the men threw the body into the river where it sank. The second old man, wishing to find it, threw himself in after it. But his body, with nose and navel cut up, floated to the surface of the water which became covered with

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1. In her Notes sur la théodicée Bambara, Mlle. S. de Ganay has given a first version of the creation in which Koni (alias Pemba), conceived of as the only creator, gives birth to "female twins in the divine substance," Mousso Koroni and Faro respectively, the latter seen in his female aspect. This version is in line with Bambara thought which sees creation as founded on the principle of duality.

The version presented here is of interest because it is absolutely comparable to the Dogon creation myth and takes into account the identity of representations among both tribes. Indeed, in the Dogon myth, creative thought (the god Amma), having formed the "egg of the world," splits it into two placentae (me), each containing one of the Nommo twins, bearers of his word charged respectively with the creation of sky and earth. The same is true of Faro and Pemba (see p. 31). But the Nommo of the earth, having lost his female double, was transformed into an animal desperately seeking his double. As a result, disorder was introduced and the Nommo of the sky was charged with putting the confusion into order. To do this, he recognized the universe, reclaiming from the other Nommo the words Amma had entrusted him with. Among the Bambara, the same roles of Pemba, Mousso Koroni, and Faro are found.

To elaborate on this, Pemba and the balanza have their counterparts in the yurugu (Vulpes pallida) and the senge (Acacia albida), Mousso Koroni in the female being Yasigui, twin of yurugu, now represented by a dignitary of the Mask Society, the yasigine. Yasigui, like Mousso Koroni, revealed the words of the creator, that is, the language of Sigui. She circumcised and excised men and women and

blood. The body was then taken and placed in the crack of a baobab tree. Eight days later, the third old man drowned while bathing; the water turned red at the place of his fall.

When the fourth old man saw this, he concluded that Faro demanded sacrifices. He became the first priest of the cult which he established and which men have honored since that day.

Since this period each of the animal and vegetable species reproduced itself, and the random births of the first ages ceased.

The women, impregnated by Faro, gave birth to humans only. Moreover, they no longer gave birth to single beings as in the days of the balanza, but to twins in the image of those the spirit had engendered to populate the waters of the earth.

Twin births were the rule for a long time until the day men betrayed Faro. Then the spirit of the air, Téliko, decided to take his turn at controlling creation.

"The breath of living beings is mine," he said; "all men's joys come from me through the wind."

"Without me, nothing can live," answered Faro, "for to breathe one must drink; water is indispensable to life."

Deprived of air and water, men wasted away. They attempted to mediate, but Faro refused, "for the body of Téliko, in contact with impure earth, is hot and worn out by the wind." Nevertheless, Téliko, out of pride, decided to take his turn at visiting the boundaries of the world, and men, believing he would be the winner, abandoned Faro to follow him. The latter, sure of his own power, waited for his adversary to attempt the crossing of the seas. At that moment, Faro dashed him against a rock, depriving him of his virility and breaking his right arm which was unarticulated like those of all the creatures of that period.

/26/ After Téliko had recognized his defeat, Faro adjudged men guilty. He punished them for their betrayal but did not forsake them as the balanza had done. First he provided them with articulations necessary for the manual labor they were forced to perform from then on in order to survive. He eliminated the rule of double births and women gave birth to single beings, twins being reserved for rare, privileged individuals. But he replaced twins by the double dya who, from his home in the water, was entrusted with watching over the living and in particular with helping women in childbirth (1).

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taught certain agricultural techniques. In both tribes, the same star, Sirius (called sigi toto by the Dogon; sigi doto by the Bambara), represents them. The androgynous Faro is comparable in all ways to the Nommo, the universal monitor, custodian of the word and of life. The yurugu and the Nommo made voyages similar to those of Pemba and Faro. In particular, at the time of their descent on earth, the yurugu, and later the Nommo, used an "ark," soro, whose counterparts are Pemba's wood pembele and Faro's ark kuru, described by certain initiates (see M. Griaule, L'Arche du monde chez les populations nigériennes. /The ark of the world among Nigerian peoples/.

For both tribes, man "the seed of the world," is the image of the cosmos. The exact role of the seed of the Acacia albida does not appear clearly in the two myths, but in both cases, it is considered to be a first aborted creation.

Faro's Reign

773 Faro, having vanquished the balanza and overcome Téliko, took over the creation himself. He reorganized the whole universe and established the order under which it still functions today. /27/ He spread his word and his light; he named and classified all things: "All things (of the universe) are under the domination of Faro; eight hundred transformations are in his power" (1).

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1. Fêw be be faro ka se kono, yelemani ba kele be a la a fe.

The number 800 which is "the end of the count," here expresses the infinite. In the so-called "eastern number system," now

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used by most Sudanese, the principal units are 1, 80, 800, etc. Ten remains a secondary unit for counting from 1 to 79 and is combined with 80 for units of the other orders.

There is also the so-called "Mandé" number system, the principal units of which are 1, 60, 600, etc. in which 10 remains a secondary unit for the count from 1 to 59, and combines with 60 for units of a higher order.

On the other hand, it must be noted that the Bambara number system is vigesimal and reflects the concept of the person as identified with the 20 fingers of his hands and feet, and spiritually endowed with two souls of the opposite sex, each of which represents the number 10. If one follows this line of thought, 10 is the unit parexcellence (see p. 213, n. 2). The two counts, 60 and 80, in Sudanese metaphysics, are complementary in the sense that one, 60, is male (60 is three times the person) and the other, 80, is female (80, four times the person) (for a discussion on 3 and 4, see p. 19). In the tribes where generally only the count based on 80 is used, the count based on 60 is still used today in certain rituals (principally among the Dogon).

773 To carry through his plan, Faro undertook a voyage of reconnaissance to the ends of the world in order to name the cardinal points.

He first visited the east, and all the beings who lived there recognized his power and his wisdom. Comparing the luminous whiteness of this region to that of hair discolored by age, he gave it the name of koro, old, a word which also indicates that it was his first stop. He made the east the seat of death.

He then went to the west. As it was dark there, he named the inhabitants klebi maw, "people of the fallen sun." He made the

west, klebi, the seat of customs and of good and beautiful things.

He then started off in the direction of the north, taking eight epochs to cross the spaces and the depths. He named the north baba, "great river," for the distance was great, the water deep, and the area difficult. In the north, which he reached in the ninth epoch, he established the seat of his control and that of all royalty.

He then went to the south where evil creatures who had listened to Mousso Koroni and followed her advice spoke a language they had stolen (1). The tried to resist Faro, but he destroyed great numbers

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1. The Dogon have a similar notion of the theft of the language. See p. 47, n. 1.

of them. Although the survivors submitted to him, he made their domain the seat of impurity and named it /28/ bani, "little river," to emphasize their weakness and their shameful failure.

The itinerary was measured in palms, sibiri, the unit of measurement being 22 palms (2). The distance separating the cardinal points,

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2. sibiri nye, literally "eye of the palm." The Bambara palm is a length obtained with an open hand, from the extremity of the thumb to the extremity of the middle finger.

the height of the sky and the depth of the earth were measured in the same way.

During the same period he determined the seasons and created the regular alternation of day and night to replace the premordial darkness. Having measured space, he created time.

Faro then placed himself in the center of the universe: still actuated by a vibratory movement, he traversed in a spiral turning from right to left up to the outer boundaries, "where there is no more than a trembling of the surface." Then he returned along the same route, going from left to right in order to "place himself at the central point (3) whence he distinguished between beings and things" (4).

3. It is said of this act, faro tyema yera; or faro sigi yoro seleke nani tyela. "Faro

773 sat down in the middle of the cardinal point."

4. A ye klali ke.

The first sky, kaba noro, is less pure than the others and the impure traces of Mousso Koroni's passage, in the form of clouds, have remained there. From that sky comes the wind which Pemba had placed there while pursuing her.

But the second sky, kaba dye, "the white sky," is fresh and already in Faro's power. It is the seat of the souls (ni) of men and animals. The Kwore spirits live there and strive to permit the passage of rain as it falls on earth from the seventh heaven.

The third, kaba fĩ, "the black sky," is the resting place of all spirits, and the fourth, kaba mana ("shedding of the sky," is the mirror of the other three. There, Faro does his daily "accounting" of the world.

In the fifth sky, koblekaba, "the red sky," Faro hands out judgments on those who have broken the laws. It is the sky of struggles, battles and victories—the sky to which the king offered sacrifices before going to war. It is also the sky of blood, fire, and hot and harmful winds.

In the sixth sky, suna kaba, the secrets of the world situation are kept (1). As its name indicates, it is also the sky of sleep. All the

1. Dyẽ dyoka gundo be sunakaba la.

souls of spirits and living beings sleep there, each in an allotted place. [827] Sleep /29/ is a purification of the soul and dreams are the directives given to it by Faro. Fainting spells, insomnia, and illness are the result of disturbances in the displacement of souls during sleep.

The seventh sky, wolõ fla kaba, is the site of Faro's reign and the seat of power, royal power in particular. From this sky, the realm of purifying water, Faro sends forth over the world the beneficial rain that brings a soul to the grain.

[821] The sun, to which Faro "holds the rope," penetrates the first sky in the morning and crosses all the others successively until evening when it skinks into the seventh. It is the god Pemba who, weary of his pursuit of Mousso Koroni, turns red. The stars are his pores, dilated by effort.

773 Empty space, or tyema, which separates the sky from the earth, remains under the domination of Téliko. It is the domain of air, the winds and insects.

773 823 The earth is divided into seven parts which correspond to the seven heavens and are as follows: (1) dugukolo, earth; (2) dugukolo fi, black earth; (3) dugukolo dye, white earth; (4) dugukolo mana, shedding of the earth; (5) dugukolo bele, "stone of the earth"; (6) dugukolo noro, soft earth; (7) dugukolo wolofla, the seventh earth.

On earth, Faro first created deep watery holes, the abysses of the sea and the rivers which he haunts. He himself dug the first well, the ponds, and the bed of torrents. He established the schedule of the rains which fall from the seventh part of heaven to the seventh part of the earth and constitute the purification and reparation of cosmic disorders.

773 825 824 He then classified living beings. In the east, wild and domestic animals, each group headed respectively by the lion and the horse; in the west, the birds; in the north, the fish with the miri (1) at their

1. Micralestes acutidens.

head, the sauria, and the batrachia; in the south, all plant life which he divided into three categories (2), indicating the purifying and

2. These are respectively: herbs, bin, headed by the narakata (Digitaria digitata); plants, fura, the first being the sindya (Cassia siberiana), and trees, dyiri, divided into three categories headed respectively by the karite, the baobab, and the nere (Parkia biglobosa).

medicinal power of each.

773 Men were also named and classified and the races distributed according to the quality of the blood into which Faro inscribed the destiny of each. He determined the castes, beginning with the slaves.

He then decided each one's foods and, to protect /30/ the species from destruction, he indicated the forbidden foods, animal and vegetable, which each category of beings had to respect.

773 Finally, he occupied himself with agriculture. In particular, he gave men, through the intermediary of the blacksmiths, the eight cereal grains that had been created simultaneously with man but had remained hidden in the sky (1). The eight grains became the basis

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1. A myth parallel to this can be found among the Dogon (see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau). It makes the Bambara blacksmith into a civilizing hero, a metamorphosis of Faro, descended from the sky in an ark, kuru, and holding in his hand a mass containing the eight cereal grains. See M. Griaule, L'Arche du monde chez les populations nigériennes; S. de Ganay, Notes sur la théodicée bambara, pp. 194-196.

for subsistence and are fundamental to the human being who carried the symbol of them on his collar-bone (2).

[171 243]

2. The eight grains are as follows: saño, small millet (Pennicillaria spicata); keninge, large millet (Sorghum gambicum); kende, red millet (Sorghum magaritiferum); fini, fonio (Digitaria exilis); syo, beans (Vigna maniculata); tikaninkuru, peas; malo, rice. The names of the seeds vary, but the same symbols occur among the Dogon. In the Bozo myth, the collar-bone is the receptacle for eight fish, represented by symbols on the forward part of canoes. See G. Dieterlen. Les Correspondances cosmo-biologiques chez les Soudanais /Cosmic-Biological Correspondences among the Sudanese/.

Everything on earth is represented in the water: living beings by their doubles or witnesses, dya; plants and minerals by an exact replica, which enabled Faro to exert constant control over the existence and actions of the beings placed in his power.

He put spirits as his representatives everywhere in charge of watching over the universal order.

1: Dieterlen--54 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

The Future Waters

773 The order of the universe prevails in space and time: the present order of things is but one phase thereof. When the "first running waters" covered the ground, Faro permitted only the primordial water to spread out; twelve waters remained hidden and they will rush forth and submerge the earth when he gives the order. The words they contain will be revealed and the "world to come" as thought out by yo will be realized.

Meanwhile, in the expectation of these "future waters," men must provide themselves with objects that will save them; the Bozo and some Bambara have canoes, shepherds have their gourds, spinners their spindles, and women their wooden stools (1). The coming /31/

[192] 1. It is significant that kuru (canoe), kuruni (spindle), and kuruni (stool) come from the same root. The word kuru designates the original globule in which Pemba descended, and which later became the wood pembele in the shape of a trough; it also designates the case or ark used by the mythical blacksmith, bearer of the nutritive [171] seeds. See p. 53, n. 1. The word kuru should be compared to koro which, in the Dogon language, has the general meaning of case, box, wooden receptacle, trough and canoe, and which also designates, among these people, the vessel in which the blacksmith descended. See M. Griaule. L'Arche du monde chez les populations nigériennes, p. 117, n. 3.

of the waters is represented by a drawing on these objects as well as on a number of other everyday tools (Fig. 3).

773 This drawing serves as the framework for a game, the sumangolo, 534 which the Bambara of all ages and both sexes play in order to "contribute to the progress of the world."

This game bears the name of the ancestor Soumangolo who traveled throughout the universe to find out and reveal to men "the

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location and disposition of the waters" (dyi walew and dyi kono few). During his voyage, "he was unable to reach the central springs of the sky, " and that is why they have remained unknown to men. /32/ But he visited "the waters of the cardinal angles" from which there emanates a vapor that determines the seasons and the temperatures. Then he studied "the waters of the cardinal sides" and asked Faro to let them

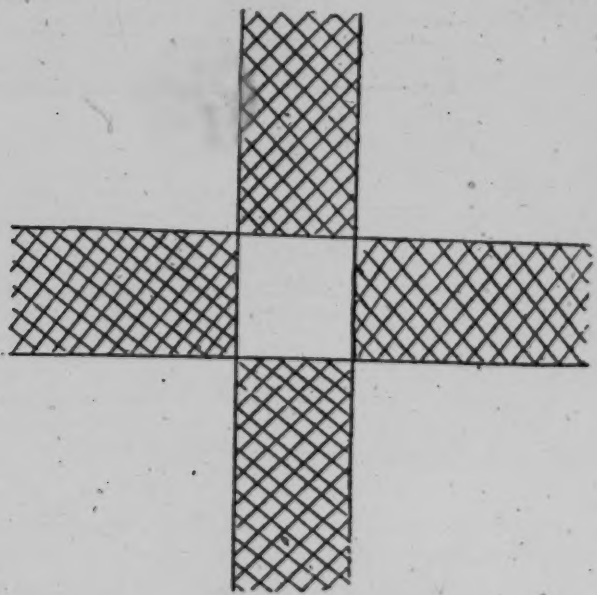

Fig. 3. —The arrival of the "twelve future waters. " The central square represents the world and its four cardinal points, the arms of the cross, and the expansion of the waters. This drawing is made on a great number of objects and tools.

stream over the earth. He crossed them in order to explore them and instruct men about them. It is said: "Soumangolo of creation has shown to people and things the ponds, rivers and old ponds" (1).

1. Dali sumangolo ye ko, ba, ko koro kono ko dyira ma ni few la.

TB 524 The game consists in the player crossing the three waters that come from each of the cardinal sides. (1) The drawing represents /33/

1. See Fig. 4. This figure is drawn on the ground: the central square represents the universe and the branches of the cross are the waters emanating from the cardinal sides and divided within each group into three parts.

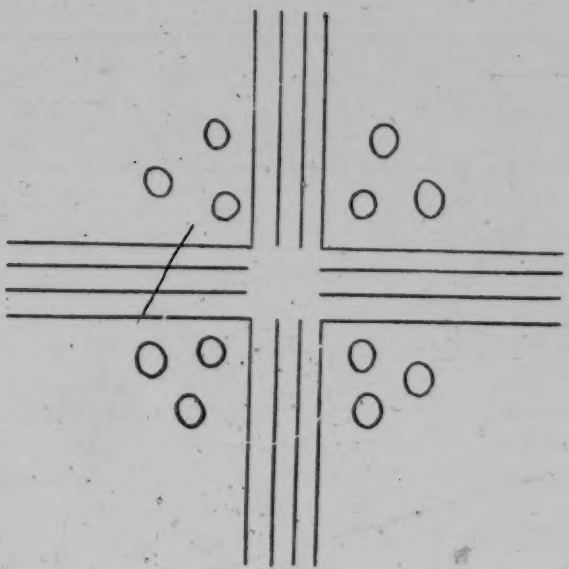

Fig. 4.—Game of the sumangolo, symbolizing the "arrival of the twelve future waters."

Three or four pebbles, depending on the sex of the player, are placed in the angles.

The player turns his back on the drawing and sings: "The little man has left the dance; the little man, the bad man has left the dance; another has not danced; may the difficulty of the water cease (tyeni bwora do la; tyeni, tyendyugu bwora do la; tye were te do ke nin kelenko; dyi geleya ka ta). He then names the three parts of water in the branch of the cross, while his partner

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points them out successively with his finger, saying: "cross the pond" (ko tike sumangolo), "cross the river" (ba tike sumangolo), "Soumangolo's descent is over" (sumangolo yigi bana). The partner removes the pebble immediately adjacent to the branch pointed to and asks: "Is this it?" (nin wa?). The player must answer: "Yes! Soumangolo." The game is again taken up in the same way at the starting point. When the onlooker places his finger on the now empty space, he asks: "Is this it?". The player must answer: "No! Soumangolo." The second pebble is removed and, to the same question, the player must then answer: "Yes! Soumangolo." Then follows the same chant, the same mimicry to get at the third pebble, which is also removed. The game is started over again in the same way, at the same starting point, and the second branch of the cross is reached. This continues until the four groups of pebbles placed in the angles are eliminated. The player who has answered without making a mistake is the winner; supposedly he has victoriously crossed "the twelve future waters."

The immediate effect of this game is to place the winner in a favorable position: his earnings increase; his enterprises succeed. But this is not all: it represents a cosmogonic operation of a high order. In the old days, sumangolo was [789] played to bring about rain in times of drought; every person playing it today contributes to the actual functioning of the universe as well as to the realization of future times awaited by men. In certain villages the ancestor Soumangolo is [796] celebrated yearly by a hearty feast at which millet beer is drunk and all day long the villagers play the game bearing his name.

The sumangolo is part of a series of figures, sometimes geometrical, which serve as the base for cosmogonic games of semi-ritual character such as the one described above.

773 [534] both the waters that flowed over the earth in the past and those that will spread over the world when Faro orders them (Fig. 4).

While awaiting that day, Faro continues his work. Taking the spiral route originally followed at the time of the reorganization of the world, every four centuries he travels about, inspecting the confines of the world, and then returns to the central point whence he surveys and governs the universe.

Chapter 2

The Representations

776 /34/ The duality of glã, in the microcosm that is man by his twin souls (ni and dya), is projected into the universe in the form of the pair, sky-earth, originally formed by the splitting of the spirit in two. The pair is represented by two supernatural powers, Faro and Pemba, to whom the principal Bambara cults are addressed.

Pemba is both spirit, strength, and matter. He is actually represented by an engraved piece of wood, symbol of plank originally responsible for the creation of all living things on earth. Theoretically, each family has one.

Faro, master of the word, reigns both in the sky and in the waters, which are the earthly reflection of the sky. In his capacity as master of the word and reorganizer of the universe, custodian of life, and guardian of souls, Faro, light and vibration, reigns in the seventh heaven. As master of the waters, he is described by the Bambara as a living being who has a body and is subject to metamorphosis. Yet to the initiated, he remains first and foremost a higher spirit, detached from contingencies and free in the exercise of the sovereign power conferred on him.

In order to understand fully the spirit of the Bambara religion, it is necessary to examine all the representations of these powers (1).

776 114 1. A few authors have summarily described Faro, in particular, L. Tauxier in Religion bambara (pp. 142-145), in

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which he quotes Msgr. Bazin and the Abbé Henry. These authors have not disclosed the fundamental role of this power nor the area he covers.

It would be proper to compare here these representations with those observed by the Griaule missions in the Sudan such as the Nommo of the Dogon, the Domfé of the Kouroumba, and Faro or Yégou of the Bozo, and published in the following books and articles:

M. Griaule, Masques Dogon /Dogon Masks/; "Le Domfé des Kouroumba /The Domfé of Kouroumba/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. II (1941), pp. 7-20. D. Paulme, Organisation sociale des Dogon /Social Organization of the Dogon/. S. de Ganay, Les Devises des Dogon /Dogon Device/; Le Binou Yébéné /The Yébéné Binou/. G. Dieterlen, Les Ames des Dogon; "Notes sur le Génie des Eaux chez les Bozo /Notes on the Water Spirit of the Bozo/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 12 (1942), pp. 149-155. G. Dieterlen and S. de Ganay, Le Génie des Eaux chez des Dogon /The Water Spirit among the Dogon/. M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau. Mrs. B. Appia has also published interesting observations in "Note sur le Génie des Eaux en Guinée /Note on the Water Spirit in Guinea/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 14 (1944), pp. 33-42.

/35/ Pemba

776 Pemba, born of primordial vibration, was originally a "globule," kuru, which whirled around to create the earth. While he was a whirlwind, a molecule broke off and became a seed, which fell onto the earth, sprouted and became the Acacia albida. The latter grew,

776 dried up, and fell; soon the only thing that remained of it was a block of wood called pembele. Out of its own substance, pembele created a female being, Mousso Koroni, and with her engendered all living things on earth, except for the human beings born of Faro. But following the disturbances created by Mousso Koroni, Pemba had to give up his power, and his Word became the property of Faro, who was entrusted with the reorganization of the universe.

Pemba was known to men who submitted to him on earth before they became aware of Faro who had remained secretly in the heavens (1). They worshipped him as their god and named him Ngala Pemba,

1. It is said: " Faro is a celestial being from above; if one says Pemba, it is because he has been seen on earth" (faro ye sana fɛ̃ ye; a fo pemba ye a ka yeli ye dugu la).

god Pemba, or Koni, to recall his origin and the awe inspired by creation (2).

2. The secret names of Pemba are innumerable.

The Pembele

778 At the present time, religious leaders and heads of families use
776 the pembele to represent Pemba; it is a block of wood, the image of the original plank (3). This object has a hollow dug out in the

3. The symbolism of the pembele, summarized below, has been studied by S. de Ganay in "Aspect de mythologie et de symbolique bambara."

center, called sele dɛ̃, reminiscent of the hole at the bottom of the grave where the corpse is placed (4). Three times 22 slanted lines

4. See p. 248.

778 776 are engraved in the hollow; below it, two groups of seven lines, divided in the left section into 3 and 4, and in the right /36/ section into 4 and 3. The 22 lines on the left represent Pemba, the creator; the 22 lines on the right, the transmission of his word and his power to Faro. The 22 central lines are "a testimony to the foreknowledge he had of all things (1)," and the symbol of the great works he accom-

1. See S. de Ganay, Aspect de mythologie et de symbolique bambara, p. 192.

plished at the dawn of creation.

The two groups of 7 lines represent Pemba, 3, and Mousso Koroni, 4, in order to recall how Pemba, originally androgynous, "separated himself from his feminine part so that the two parts might unite as male and female to produce living things"(2).

2. See S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 195.

The wooden plank, in addition, is engraved at each end with 22 notches which are, to the left, Pemba and his words, and to the right, all the words entrusted to the spirits and still unknown to men.

The object, taken as a whole, is the image of the universe: its upper surface, upon which are inscribed the lines, is the sky; its lower surface is the earth; the four sides are the four directions of space. It is also the first grave ever dug for the ancestor; the sele dé concentrates "the active and latent energies." Here "the pembele can be considered as thought which is constantly unfolding and which, starting from its own substance, stretches out into time to entrust itself finally to Faro in the guise of the word" (3).

3. See S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 191

Finally, the pembele summarizes the myth of the creation and organization of the world by the series of 22 lines that decorate it; the duality expressed in the double engraving of 7 lines; its shape, reminiscent of the primeval plank, generator of life on earth; and the wood of which it is made—wood from the balanza tree, formerly master of creation.

All these characteristics justify the name of Ngala, god, which is given to the pembele, for it possesses in addition all the power and

776 strength (nyama) of the divinity it represents (1).
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1. That strength is particularly active at the angles of the plank and thus takes on the name boy nyama, "venomous nyama."

778 The pembele is an altar, a guarantee of prosperity, life, and the spiritual and material patrimony of the group to which it belongs. There are different types of pembele: those belonging strictly to families, on which the meat eaten by the family is carved, and those belonging to sanctuaries, which must be engraved with symbolic marks. The small board used for circumcisions bears the same name; it /37/ recalls Mousso Koroni's mutilation on the pembele and the origin of the removal of foreskin and clitoris from the human body (2).

2. See p. 38.

The role of Pemba, as promoter of the force, nyama, which activates all beings, and as the hypostasis of the earth, is illustrated by the ritual use the Bambara made of the pembele which represents Pemba.

764 After each death, the head of the family gathers the force, nyama, which emanates from the corpse, and entrusts it to the pembele, "which preserves it until a birth occurs in the family." A parallel ritual bestows the force of the dead ancestor on the newborn child (3).

3. See p. 253.

At the time of the ceremonies relating to the large pembele, "all the participants bring a small piece of meat which, after having been placed on the plank, is eaten raw so that fire may not destroy the beneficial nyama emanating from the divinity itself" (4).

4. S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 199.

Finally, "in cases where it is necessary to obtain a maximum of nyama, infinitesimal slivers of wood are taken from the corners of the board, where its force is concentrated... However, if this practice is abused, the nyama of the earth becomes diminished. It is

778 understandable that the strength of the large pembele should be preserved intact since it represents the world. No ritual concerning it is celebrated alone by the man in charge without the presence of a council of elders. Its four corners can be scraped only under worthwhile circumstances for, according to the informant, the god pembele will not tolerate his being used for trifles. As the corners are gradually scraped off and consequently the nyama contained in these corners is reduced, the earth becomes worn out. And if the earth should lose its nyama, all would be empty of its substance; the millet would still grow but its stalk would yield no grain...women would bear no children, no longer having any nyama. Bereft of strength, people would no longer be able to fight. The earth would subsist, but would be sterile" (1).

1. S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 200.

The Balanza

824 The tree balanza, the plant form of Pemba's metamorphosis, vanquished by Faro, is no longer worshipped by men. However, the Bambara's attitude towards it and certain ritual gestures of which it is /38/ sometimes the object, recall the time when, after having spread its domination over all creation, it introduced death to the human species.

[761] In certain settlements, the belief is that whoever rests in its shade dies, the tree having taken his dya. In others, women still make it [782] offerings of karite oil, despite advice from men who have informed them of its inefficacy. They lie at its base, simulating illness, agony, and then death to recall the painful events that have brought them to men; finally they touch the ground successively with each of their four principal articulations as a sign of submission, before smearing the tree trunk with the oil they have brought. In still others, [843] in order to recall that births used to take place near the tree, pregnant women are presented by their husbands to the tree to each childbirth.

The fields surrounding the settlements in the region of Ségou are covered profusely with balanza. The device of Ségou, which tells of the history of the town, enumerates the names of the trees planted at the time of its founding. This device also mentions kokuruni (literally, little humped back), the balanza of Banankoroni (pl. I, a),

824 considered as the founding ancestor transformed into a tree. The old men of the village come to the tree each year, leaning their backs [844] against its trunk, while the placentae of newly delivered women are hung on it (1).

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1. The balanza groves around the Bambara settlements have attracted the attention of botanists. M. G. Roberty, in Les Associations végétales de la vallée moyenne du Niger /The Vegetable Associations of the Middle Nigerian Valley/, has studied their agricultural role: "The Dumosaeptum arboreitoides, cultivation under the balanzas. Artificial, well defined landscape. Trees losing their leaves during the rainy season, regaining them during the dry season, thorny, regularly spaced, but planted in the distant past. The Acacia albida loses its leaves in June and grows them again in December, thus furnishing shade in the dry season and humus in the rainy season. The Dumosaeptum owes it its permanent villages.... The date of the introduction of this very useful tree into the western Sudan remains shrouded in mystery, as is the time and method of its dissemination over cultivated fields. It is probable that the Acacia albida comes from eastern Africa, somewhere south of the equator. How did it come as far as the Bambara country without losing its original seasonal cycle? What sultan, or what agronomer of genius forced its multiplication around the Bambara villages? These questions remain, for the time being, without answers. The tales of the first European conquerors seem to have proved that numerous "tatas," the enormous citadels of red mud, were enclosed by living balanzas fences with joined trunks... It is probable that their military use has preceeded everywhere their agricultural use... We have very little information concerning

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the latter... We are familiar enough with the Bambara agricultural customs, but none of them would have brought about the spread of the balanzas, their regular spacing in the fields, and their protection from goats. In almost all the cases we have observed, the balanzas are of considerable age, development and density. There lies in this subject a fine dissertation topic for a young ethnographer and naturalist." (pp. 135, 136).

The myths of the Bambara answer M. Roberty's questions.

/39/ Mousso Koroni

776 Mousso Koroni is the impure earth; she symbolizes all that is opposed to light: darkness, night, witchcraft. She is also the symbol of rebellion, disorder, and impurity. Pemba pursued her in vain in his effort to take back what he had given her: the "words" she had received from him were divulged to men in spite of him.

Although no cult honors her and no sacrifice is offered her, her name is cited in various ceremonies and mentioned in the chants; her actions are recalled by certain gestures in the ritual.

776 304 On the other hand, she is the initiator of the separation of the sexes realized in the human body by the removal of the foreskin and the clitoris, an operation which after her betrayal, she performed on all those she met. In this way, she placed them in the same state of rupture in which she found herself: a female principle as opposed to Pemba, the male principle. In addition, she is present in every human being in the form of an evil force, the wanzo, which she had communicated to all those she approached, and of which one must rid oneself through the methods she herself inaugurated: circumcision and excision (1).

1. See p. 95.

776 241 Mousso Koroni is also the originator of certain agricultural techniques which she taught men, and every year, in certain villages, she

776 241 is represented as making her nocturnal visitation at the time the grain is threshed. An old woman, dressed in rags, wearing old unmatched sandals, and carrying broken gourds, runs about the countryside simulating madness. She follows the mythological itinerary from west to south and from east to north, and then returns and sits down near the granaries (1).

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1. However, the very first agricultural techniques known as fyẽ ti (literally, cultivation of the wind) are recalled, particularly among the Bozo, by random sowings of a certain number of wild grasses, then cereals, in the fields where the harvest is offered to Faro. Similar rituals are celebrated in certain Bambara villages. The techniques taught by Mousso Koroni came after those "of the wind," and precede that of millet cultivation.

For information on some agricultural rituals of the Bozo, see G. Dieterlen, "L'Agriculture rituelle des Bozo /Ritual Agriculture of the Bozo/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 20 (1950).

776 857 Mousso Koroni's agricultural work and her unhappy wanderings are also represented in a children's ritual, carried out at night during the cultivation period. One of the players, the yukuri or dantoni (literally, little hunchback), wears sandals for ears, a hump at the small of his back, a cloth tail tied low about his waist. He goes begging from /40/ door to door, followed by all the uncircumcised of his neighborhood. He pretends to cultivate and to thresh grain while his companions intone chants recalling Mousso Koroni's mythical actions. After his round is finished and the presents of millet are gathered, the player, pursued by all the others, runs off and disappears amid catcalls.

776 241 783 But while this parody of cultivation, with its rituals and chants, recalls the phases of Mousso Koroni's disorderly life, the agricultural techniques she initiated earlier are in themselves an important expression of the reparation made to the confusions she had caused. Every hoeing by the farmer is a wound inflicted on the impure earth,

776 hence on Mousso Koroni. The ritual cultivation of millet, a noble
244 activity to which every aristocratic Bambara must dedicate himself,
183 is an institution which Faro taught in his time and constitutes a purification and a reordering of the soil (1).

1. Dugukolo be be dyuruma, "the whole earth is impure." But as only virgin soil is considered impure, it is also said: dyurumu be be dugukolo ka forow sani nyala do, "the whole earth is impure except for the cultivated fields." The word dugukolo (literally, bone of the earth) designates both the earth as a whole and the earth as matter. The same notions [71] concerning the impurity of the earth hold for the Dogon. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 94.

Faro

Faro's Shapes

776 Faro was a "voice" before he materialized into a body. In his role as master of the word and reorganizer of the universe, he is represented by a spiral, munu, in which he occupies the point of origin at all times. The spiral is situated in the center of the cardinal points (2). Its vibratory unrolling represents "the displacement of

2. This "central point," which is also the firmament, is described by the Bambara as sa tyema kolo, literally, the bone of the middle of the sky.

Faro for the realization of all things in the universe."

776 This image is materialized in a basketry headdress, yugu, with a
292 spiral of eight turns. The straw sprigs that form the spokes supporting the spiral symbolize the vibration; the intervals, yugunye or eye of the yugu, which separate them are rays of light, the spiral representing

the daily movement of the sun "which unfolds until evening." The regularity of the rays symbolizes order and the classification of beings and things by Faro. The /41/ ends of the straw sprigs forming the spiral must remain free: they represent the infinite extension of Faro's realm and power. The hat is also a mask "which hides Faro's invisible face and through which he watches over the world" (1).

1. Today, a basket of considerably higher dimensions is made and used by women (See pl. I, b).

The headgear yugu was formerly reserved for the king, who wore it under a turban. Certain deserving old men were also permitted to keep it. The rituals of making and wearing this headdress attest to the importance attributed to it. In particular, when an old man was suspected of having committed a serious offense, his hat was pierced with four holes representing the four cardinal points. He was then made to wear it, thus submitting him to Faro's judgment; if found guilty, he died.

As the spirit of the waters, Faro is supposed to belong to the white race and his body to be half albino flesh and half copper (pl. I, c).

A myth relates how his physical being was formed.

When Faro caused the streaming waters to descend on earth, he manifested himself for a long time only by his voice. He had no body, and since he needed appropriate matter to achieve one, he bided his time in the waters of the sea.

The winged spirit Téliko, who had the body of an albino, wished one day, in his arrogance and jealousy, to cross the world in order to know it and to dominate it. Faro, warned by the dogfish, decided to seize his enemy's body to complete his own. The albino, who always flew, fed on his own substance. He chewed his own flesh and his bones were soon bare; the marrow came out of them. It turned into red copper which fell into the sea and nourished Faro.

While Téliko descended to the water level, the dogfish that was watching him sang in order to attract him. The albino, aware of the danger, climbed back to the highest heaven, attempting to continue his flight and to reach the ends of the world. But he quickly lost strength and after his dya had fallen into the waters, his body was

176 173 seized by Faro who, after giving the genitals to the dogfish, completed his own physical being. His head and torso were made of the albino's flesh; his tail was of copper, as were his breasts, the "essential organs that fed and revived the world."

Faro's head can be compared to that of a white woman: his eyes are black and piercing; his hair is black, straight and long like a horsetail.

/42/ His ears are two holes with no outer ear, but are protected by two fins. Two necklaces of copper and gold hang from his neck and act as receivers, enabling him to hear all sounds and all words: the copper necklace reports idle talks of little importance; the gold one, secret conversations and powerful words. Faro puts all that the receivers collect in his fins, which are also the mirror reflecting all that his eyes have seen, both good or bad. He looks, shuts his eyes, and puts out his tongue; the images penetrate into his fins and classify themselves according to the regular movements of his tail. Thus, images and sounds are chronologically inscribed and can be brought before him at any moment "like a card pulled out of a file." In this way he knows to what use he can put things and events.

Both his hands—the right one male and the other female—and the end of his tail are webbed. Without any apparent sex, the preeminence of the feminine shape usually attributed to him recalls that he once impregnated himself in order to give birth to twin girls at the time the first waters streamed onto the earth.

Faro's appearance, which is linked to the problem of his origin, has been the object of legends and tales among the people. While these have attracted the scholar's attention, they present a serious problem. The legends are truncated, episodic, and often childish versions of an imposing myth, which is perfectly constructed and often expresses a dogma.

176 173 171 Two examples will be given of legends whose only interest here is to suggest further research into myths forming the framework for collective symbols. One of these legends is Peul /Fulani/, and the other Touareg /Tuareg/.

1. At a time when the Niger was but a narrow, deep river, a pregnant Peul woman asked some Bozo fishermen, who usually ferried people on request, to take her across the stream. At first they refused,

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using her pregnancy as an excuse. As she insisted, they took her in their canoe, left her on the other shore, and went away.

As soon as she had landed, she was seized with pains of her labor. The water of the river dried up at the point where it had been deepest. A voice came out of it, advising the woman to bear her child there. She went down into the pit after having left her clothes on the shore.

From her womb there first came forth milk, honey, and precious stones (lulu) which dropped onto the milk and honey as though on /43/ a straw mat. The woman was writhing with pain: the child finally appeared feet first and fell on the stones. His hands and feet were webbed.

As the water began to reappear, she attempted to get away, but in vain. Her husband, who had run up to the river's edge and had found her clothing there, saw her appear three times holding the child above the waters. She then disappeared, carried away by the current. Both she and the child became Faro spirits.

2. The village of Siyango, located fifteen kilometers from Nyono, has a very deep, perennial natural well called ala kolo faro, Faro of the well of god, "or Mbata dyi," "water of Mbata." No one drinks its water. At the beginning of creation, a woman named Mbata lived alone and without water. She gave birth to twins. Exhausted and dying of thirst, she came out of the cave and, going down to the edge of the sand, prayed that God let her die if she could have no water. A spirit appeared and said to her: "God will entrust all waters to you; but he will first prepare you a home." A pit having been formed and filled with water, the woman stepped inside and was transformed into Faro. She then took her two children in with her; one became a male spirit and the other, a female spirit.

The pit extended underground through a kind of tunnel and Mbata, who had followed it down, came out again with so much water that the Niger was created.

The water of this well was soon forbidden to human beings, for if anyone looked at himself in it, Mbata would take hold of his shadow and make him fall. The corpse, using the underground passage, came out into the river. Those who threw themselves into the water sometimes also became Faro.

One day Mbata resumed her human shape and went to the market where she bought tomatoes. She asked those she met what they did for the spirit who owned the water they so much needed. She advised them to offer him copper and gold and to slaughter white rams at the well.

The following day, in order to give thanks to Faro, the villagers went to the edge of the well to the sound of drums and sacrificed the animal. The water swelled, seethed up, and formed a streat which still runs into the Niger today.

The composition of Faro's body determines the behavior of men in the rituals performed in his honor. While the usual offerings of blood, tomatoes, raw cereal mash, and baked cakes are consumed by him and returned to the givers in the shape of material possessions (children, millet, rain) or spiritual possessions (preservation of the souls of the living and the dead), the choice content of the offerings or sacrifices, the albino and copper, are reserved only for him and help increase his strength and stimulate his action. /44/ He absorbs them for his own sake; thus it is said that: "copper and albino are the sacrificial privileges of Faro."

Manifestations of Faro

All the atmospheric manifestations in the sky are evidence of Faro's presence and power. Rain, thunder, squalls, hail, and the rainbow all demonstrate his action. The lightning that bursts forth in the koblenkaba is a weapon, a small axe (sempere ni or dyele dɛ̃ ɛ̃ini) which he throws from the top of the sky. If lightning strikes, it is a proof of his revenge. In the tree, the lightning hits the gecko (ala ɣugu), an evil animal which, when it lives in homes near the hearth, supposedly stirs up fires of conflagration. When lightning strikes men, it is in punishment for the breaking of a taboo. The stone axes, found at the point where lightning strikes, are collected and kept in the sanctuaries of the rain altars, to be used in case of drought or in the course of seasonal rites. They are also placed in the seeded fields, so that their strength, by communicating itself to the seed, may be beneficial to germination.

On earth, Faro is conceived of as a unique being whose principal home is the Niger; he is present everywhere. In practice, the Bambara believe that a spirit haunts each torrent, pond, or well, each gourd of water, each dewdrop; they call him dyi tigi, "master of water."

776 He takes on many forms. He can be seen in the brush as a gazelle feeding on wild tomatoes and onions. As a ram with golden fleece and wearing ear ornaments, he travels underground along gold veins. As a young and seductive woman he goes to the villages to seduce the boys and take them away with him. He is the head of the fleeting torrent that runs after a rainfall; he is the seething and swelling of the currents. He can be recognized in the bluish haze that floats above the ponds. A stream that dries up is a sign of his anger.

Faro's Realm

776 821 At the beginning, the waters that originated in the "central springs of the sky" and streamed over the earth, were pure, clear, beneficial and "easy." But after Mousso Koroni's betrayal and that of the beings who listened to her, impurity was communicated to the earth /45/: the water that covered the earth clouded, changed color, and became "difficult." It either dried up or, on the contrary, flooded the land, drowning living beings.

Today only the streaming rain water has preserved its character, more especially the first rain that falls at the beginning of winter. [783] It is considered a purifying agent par excellence and is called dane sandyi, "water that sows," for it brings to the grains their soul, ni; the earth, sterile and "empty," becomes full and fertile, plants are reborn, animals and insects multiply (1).

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1. A person who is generous and good is referred to as being like this first rain. It is also said of the spirit: "the spirit [is good like] the first rain" (miri dane sandyi).

The terrestrial waters, Faro's kingdom, are classified into seven distinct realms. They are in layers which correspond to the seven parts of the sky and earth.

The first, dyi woyo "seething water," is surface water: it seethes when Faro makes himself known, and overflows in floods, as the heads of streams are swelled by the storm. It is also the lustral water used for purification and the water drawn for drinking. [783]

776 821 The second, dyi ble "red water," is Faro's copper, a reflection of koblenkaba or "red sky." It is similarly the seat of the spirit's warlike or punitive activities. Water of wrath and vengeful action, it drowns the guilty. Through it, Faro strikes the bodies and health of those who do not recognize his dominion.

Faro prefers to sojourn in the dyi fi, "black water," where he keeps his secrets. It is to this water that one prays to seek grace. It is from the dyi fi that the twelve future waters will flow.

Calm and felicity reign in the dyi sumane, "cold water," where the fish live. The dya of earthly bwings are preserved in it.

While Faro drowns those he punishes in the dyi ble, it is in the madũ (literally, person, to eat) that their bodies rot or become the prey of fish.

The sixth category of water, kosira (literally, thing of fear) is a jail. In it Faro temporarily places all that comes under his domination.

The seventh water, dyi wolofla, corresponds to the seventh heaven.

776 823 782 In the Niger, the places inhabited by Faro bear the general name of faro tyin. These are mostly deep depressions, well known to the shore dwellers, particularly the Bozo. /46/ Sometimes a consecrated stone, placed on the shore, receives the sacrifices offered to the spirit.

The most celebrated is a place called Souko, located upstream from Koulikoro near the village of Kayo. The local spirit engendered all that now lives in the river. Because of this he is worshipped by all Bozo and Somono fishermen, who used to send delegations to the annual sacrifice that took place during the dry season.

776 823 The Faro of Ségou lives in the Faka, a deep hole located close to the right bank, facing the town. Legend has it that the Faka is extended by tunnels: one links the river to the Bani while the other opens out at Dya and was used by the founders of the settlement in mythical times.

[825] The Faka is placed under the guardianship of a crocodile to which each year the inhabitants offered victims. At the bottom of the hole there is a fat blind scaleless polyo, which the fishermen always return to the water if they catch it in their nets "because it is Faro's gate-keeper." In olden times, a flat stone upon which were traced a representation of Faro and black dots equal in number to the inhabitants of Ségou was visible in the deepest part of the waters. On [782] this occasion an albino was sacrificed (by slitting his throat) and the first fruits of the harvest were offered to the spirit.

776 823 782 On market day, a gourd filled with river water, called fle ndinye faro, is placed close to the shore where the canoes land. To drink a mouthful of this water is equivalent to a sacrifice to the spirit. The drinker gives a cowrie as alms to the beggar who drew the water, for "never can [Faro's] water be bought or sold" (1).

1. Ma ti dyi fere ma ti dyi sã.
See pl. II, b.

At Sama, the faro tyin is a kind of natural corridor located amidst the rocks bordering and overhanging the left bank of the river.

[825] The finches nesting there warn the boatmen of the place's sanctity by flying off; the boatmen then stop to pray. In passing, they throw an offering and those who have broken taboos purify themselves by washing. Each shows the spirit all that he carries with him. Two nearby trees, faro sõndyiri or "trees of Faro's sacrifice," are used to tie up the white bulls at twilight. The following day, they are thrown alive into the river with millet mash and cola nuts. At the bottom of the passage, on a fairly smooth surface, the image of Faro described above was drawn each year in the course of the ceremony celebrated by the society of the Komo.

/47/ Faro also haunts ponds and wells. In the village of Nango a natural well was revealed to a hunter by a white ram which appeared out of a thicket. The village was built after the discovery of the water hole where the inhabitants now worship the spirit.

In the village of Siyango, the water of the well in which Faro resides is tabooed, the site of the well being the seat of all the religious ceremonies of the villagers. There the newborn are presented, and deaths and marriages announced. The sick are treated by being [755] made to drink the well water and wash in it. From his herd, each person offers every year an animal which is thrown alive into the pit. [681] Finally, those condemned to death are executed by drowning in the same spot.

Faro's Auxiliaries

776 773 Faro has placed spirits as his representatives in the skies, in space, on earth, in the trees, and in the rocks of the mountains. They see

776 to it that all things proceed in good order. In addition he is accom-
773 panied by auxiliaries who participate in his work.

The most important of these is his "secretary," the bolokuruni, a blacksmith of the black race who had lost the use of his hands and who went to live with Faro after his crippling.

This blacksmith lived on earth at a time when craftsmen did not know the use of tongs and used to seize the red iron in their bare hands to carry it to the anvil. The man who was to become Faro's companion had reached an advanced age and was still practicing his art when one day both his wrists were broken by the hammer of a clumsy apprentice. Mad with pain, he ran to the river and threw himself in to ease his suffering. Seeing that in his grief the man had turned to him, Faro took pity on him and kept him at his side. His body was never found and a diviner told his family the happy event of his disappearance.

The bolokuruni accompanies Faro and assists him in his incessant labor. He is the one who consults the register in Faro's fins in which everything is inscribed. "The requested image is sent from the fins into the pupil of Faro's eye which the blacksmith watches." As this image is reflected in the servitor's eye, he uses it according to the orders he receives. Thus he verifies daily the count of those living and dead.

776 /48/ The spirit has numerous auxiliaries among the animals. His
825 airborne messenger is the swallow. It never rests upon the impure earth and its wings, reproduced on the headdress of the old men, symbolize the words it carries. The scorpion's stinger is the weapon given by Faro to the original twins: whoever attacks or wounds a twin is stung by this insect. The crocodile is the executor of Faro's important works: it kills those guilty of breaking taboos, or chases undesirables away from the river's edge. The scaleless fish, called kokoni, directed the first streaming of the waters on earth (1). The

1. See p. 33.

tneni (2) is Faro's "ordure" which it is the duty of someone to sweep

2. Alestes nigrilineatus.

776 825

up (1). The small miri (2), "mother of fish," is regarded as the

1. The ordure has its use in religious life. See p. 258.

2. Micralestes acutidens.

creator and guardian of all fish. Its name is associated with all prayers that are recited on the waters. The dodo (3) is Faro's messenger in

3. Tétrodon fahaka.

the waters and transmits his orders and directives, and the polyo (4)

4. The polyo fi is Herterobranchus longifilis; the polyo ble is Heterobranchus bidorsalis.

is the gatekeeper, controlling those who wish to penetrate into the spirit's domain.

776 824

Certain plants are in constant communication with him. The yayale (5), "Faro's grass," grew on the mound where the mythical twins

5. Andropogon (Hyparrhenia) hirtus.

were born. The tomato, ngoyo (6), is assimilated in the blood. It

6. Lycopersicum cerasiforme, the native tomato (pl. II, a).

carries within it the potential embryo for its seeds are multiples of seven, the number of duality. It is by means of the tomato that Faro impregnates women for it possesses, like humans and animals, a ni and a dya. When it has a double bloom, the two twin tomatoes are given to the women so that they may bear twins. If the fruit is single on the stem, it is split in two to be cooked and eaten. The gesture of splitting separates it symbolically from its dya which is thus returned to Faro (7).

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7. Only vegetables whose spiritual essence does not have to be preserved are cooked, "for to cook is to shatter the soul."

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In each village are grown one or several small fields of tomatoes, called "Faro's fields," or "fields of twins." The fruits of these fields are reserved for the worship of the spirit (1).

1. On the site of the ancient village of Soroba, at the edge of a pond located near the present-day village, there are two rectangular fields of tomatoes dedicated to male twins and four square fields dedicated to female twins in the village. Each year the villagers gather at the edge of the pond for a ceremony. The symbolic words relating to twins are recited and a prayer is said, to be followed by ablutions.

The fruit that is harvested is offered to the spirit by squashing it on a neighboring tree trunk.

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/49/ All metals belong to Faro. The seven /sic/ principal metals are the following: copper (male), brass (female), gold, silver, tin, and iron. Copper and brass come from the fifth sky (koblenkaba). They descend at each thunderclap and, along with the "thunderstones," penetrated into the soil. They were discovered by a diviner at the bottom of a pond that had dried up because of a broken taboo. Be-
[301] cause of their divine origin, copper and brass represent "Faro's sounds." These sounds twist themselves around the spiralled copper or brass earrings that everyone wears and penetrate the eardrum, thus making it possible to hear words. Gold plays a part in the building of certain altars (boli) to which it confers strength and stability.

The sacrifices made with or on copper, brass, or gold have a restraining influence on the spirit for they are of his own essence.

No woman wearing copper, brass, or gold jewelry, may cross the Niger without opening her luggage out of deference to the spirit, for "all ornaments belong to him and often must be returned to him after death.

[784] It is taboo to bring metal into contact with cow's butter, an oily substance that does not allow water to penetrate.

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a) The Acacia albida called kokuruni (Banankoroni).

Plate I

b) In the foreground, baskets of spiralled straw called yugu (Ségou market).

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c) Drawing representing Faro (Sama).

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a) Ngoyo tomatoes (Ségou market).

Plate II

b) Faro's water gourd (Ségou market).

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Ba 776 436 Legend has it that cowrie shells, widespread throughout Black Africa and used as money, come from the deep water where Faro keeps his fortune. Faro "sleeps on a bed of cowrie." Their mythical origin explains their role and both the economic and religious value attributed to them.

Ba 776 823 The black earth of the river banks, bogo fi, such as that found on the sea shore in sandy places, contains the strength of the spirit and is used in numerous rites. Smeared at the base of the interior walls of the huts, it symbolizes Faro's presence in the bosom of the family. It serves to decorate the headdress of the circumcised (1). Those who

1. See p. 233, Fig. 14.

live far from the Niger or from any source of water pray to it as if addressing Faro.

Ba 776 173 Some men occupy a privileged position in their relationship with the spirit. The first are the eight mythical ancestors, the eldest of whom is Koumabana. They received the word of the spirit, transmitted it to their descendants, explained before dying the new order of things, and instituted the cult.

At present they are still venerated as the prototypes of /50/ the human being in his new environment. Along with immortality, man lost the heavenly food which, until then, had been sufficient to nourish him. The articulated limbs which were provided for him dedicated him to manual labor, the techniques of which were taught him little by little. On the other hand, in the spiritual domain a deep change also occurred. In primitive times, man lived an almost animal existence and was without any responsibility. His abandonment by the balanza brought him suffering and death, but with them, his consciousness, symbolized by Faro's "word," developed. Along with death, illness, sorrow, bad instincts and the hard daily labor, there appeared also man's feeling about his own person and his place in an ordered universe, governed by Faro, as opposed to primitive chaos.

The eight ancestors taught men to venerate Faro, to ask him for all they needed, and to thank him for all they received. Therefore their names are invoked in most prayers and the episodes of their lives are told to the young to whom their works are held up as an example.

Bo 776 773 Mention should also be made here of the special position held by the Bozo who were born to the mythical girl twins, daughters of Faro (2).

1:Dieterlen--79 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8
Bozo MS6

2. See p. 33, n. 4.

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In many cases, this origin enables them to intervene with the spirit, where others are helpless. Born as twins of the master of the waters, the Bozo never suffered the contamination caused by Mousso Koroni which affects all other men. Because of this fact it is possible for them to establish communication with the spirit at the bottom of ponds or in the river and to seek out the bodies of those drowned. The fishing rights conferred on them by Faro were never contested by the conquerors who settled on the shore of the Niger during the historic period.

Numerous articles or essays have already been published on the Bozo. Their language and fishing techniques have been studied. However, inquiries into their religion and the image they have of themselves prove very difficult. This is caused, on the one hand, by their apparent conversion to Islam and, on the other, by their reticence in discussing their traditional system. Such a contribution, however, will be indispensable to scholarship in the study of certain aspects of Sudanese metaphysics, particularly that of the Bambara and the Dogon. The myths of both groups mention the apparition of the Bozo on earth as coinciding with the beginning of /51/ Faro's actions which, in turn, coincides with the development of techniques among the Bambara, and with the "third word" of the Dogon (1).

1. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau.

In addition, the "joking relationships" which they maintain with the Dogon and which go back to the origin of a whole system of tribal and intertribal alliances clearly indicate the importance of the symbolic role conferred upon them (2).

2. See p. 119, n. 1.

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Whenever he feels the need, Faro carries women and young girls off to his watery home. Many disappearances in the course of river crossings by canoe are attributed to him.

In olden times, each year a young virgin, chosen for her beauty by the griot of the village, became the wife and servant of Faro. In most cases she was willing and proud to become his eternal companion. On a designated day, wearing her finest jewelry, she was

776 brought to the middle of the river and thrown in while the villagers
782 prayed the spirit to give the village his protection and to bring rain to future harvests.

Faro's Taboos

776 All of Faro's subjects, in particular the Bambara of both sexes and
784 of all ages, are requested to respect a certain number of taboos.

The black earth, bogo fi, of the river banks, used ritually in many instances, would be excellent in pottery making. The women potters, however, cannot use it because it blackens in the process of baking. No pottery that has been fired may be washed in those places haunted by the spirit (1).

1. At Ségou, numerous drownings are blamed on the increasing frequency with which this taboo is broken.

[262] Butter in many places is forbidden by Faro and may not be preserved in water. (2)

2. This taboo is linked to the relation between Faro and the Peul, but the nature of their relationship has not been clarified.

No one crosses the river without opening his luggage and presenting Faro with the gold, copper, or food it contains. As a rule, the wearing of metals is forbidden in those places haunted by the spirit.

776 The principal taboo concerns menstrual blood which was originally
784 caused to flow because of the sins and impurity of Mousso /52/
841 Koroni. No menstruating woman may visit the places inhabited by Faro; none may draw water, wash clothes or cooking utensils, or cleanse herself in any of these spots. In addition, a man whose wife is in such condition must refrain from appearing at religious ceremonies or, if he is a priest, from performing the ritual.

In this part of Africa, as in many others, menses are conceived of as a necessary flow of empty blood, impure because it has not contributed to the formation of the foetus, the embryo of which each

776 woman carries within her. (1) Deprived of Faro's essentially im-
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1. See G. Dieterlen, "Mécanisme de l'impureté chez les Dogon" /The Mechanism of Impurity Among the Dogon/ Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 82 ff.

pregnating power and contrary to its generating action, this blood is considered evil, and all that recalls it or comes near it is excluded from the ritual.

Faro's Character, Role, and Deed

776 The principal characteristics of Faro's deed in creation are: omnipotence, omnipresence, and benevolence. Everything, whether animate or inanimate, depends on him in time and space.

The Bambara are extremely sensitive to Faro's power over the universe. They say: "Neither by day nor by night does Faro stop his incessant work." He sees to the efficient workings of the order which he inaugurated and which requires constant attention. His time is divided: from dawn until evening he occupies himself with the earth and its inhabitants; the next twelve hours' work is devoted to aquatic animals and members of his own family. Procreation depends on his will; it is he who, in the sky and in the water, controls the physical and spiritual life of all beings: the soul and vital force. In due order, with which the humans cooperate by observing his laws, he maintains life and makes the new bodies participate in the functioning of the universe according to a regular rhythm. Souls are reincarnated, assuring the continuity of spiritual forces in the world. The same power directs all acts of individual and social life: birth, circumcision, excision, initiation, marriage, agricultural work, voyages, war or peace.

Throughout the development of individual life, it is Faro who maintains man's physical integrity: he gives him health, necessary to
[753] action. Sickness is always /53/ considered a loss of strength which the individual must ask Faro to restore. The sovereign master of man's life, he has the power to take it away from him.

776 773 At death, he takes back the spiritual principles of the diseased and preserves them in water so as to reintegrate them into another body, thus using forces which are eternally reusable. The product of the "shedding" (mana or folo) of souls which remain on the altars is for him in a way of constantly verifying the account of those living and dead who are entrusted to him.

On earth, men are indebted to him for all they possess. He gave them language, an expression of thought, and taught them its usage, having warned them against the misuse and evil use of words.

The techniques of survival, another expression of "Faro's words," so necessary to their lives since they have to provide the means for their existence, were revealed to them by the spirit. He helped them with his sovereign power, either by directly providing them with new tools, or by inspiring some of them to develop new techniques by putting to use observed facts. In this way, he gave the Bozo fishing nets which enabled them to catch the first recorded animal food, the fish; likewise, he encouraged among the Bambara the discovery of weaving through observing the spider's web.

He also gave men certain seeds which became the origin of farming, such as cotton and fonio, both of them being known before millet and the other cereals.

As proprietor of cowrie shells and metals, he is the master of wealth, distributing it as he pleases. Thus, one who owns precious [782] metal is responsible to Faro for it and owes him a part of one's earnings. For this reason many offerings are made by throwing gold or copper into the river.

776 241 Faro's deed is essential where the Bambara's main activity, agricultural work, is concerned. Every man with dignity and nobility must cultivate the earth in order to honor Faro. Each stroke of the hoe is a wound inflicted upon the earth and a punishment for its impurity. Each stroke of the hoe humiliates Mousso Koroni and purifies the earth. Faro watches over the soul and the vital force of the seeds. Only he can provide rain necessary to germination, for rain contains the soul, (ni) of the cereal grains as does the water of ponds and streams which one collects in case of drought.

776 774 241 Millet receives its soul as soon as it gets the humidity of the earth, and from that time on, it accompanies the various stages of germination with utterances which, at the beginning of the world, could be heard. As soon as /54/ it has received the rain, the seed splits and says: "My place is assigned." Then the sprout comes out of the earth

776 with the words: "May I be protected." Finally the growth of the stem
774 is accompanied by a third utterance: "May I be obeyed" (1). It pre-
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1. These are the three formula:
ndyora, nga kolosi, nga bunye.

serves its soul until full maturity, that is, the moment is is harvested. When the harvester's blade cuts the spike or the cluster, the plant sends its soul into Faro's realm with these words: "Iron is forbidden my grain; soul, go away to the house of water" (2). Thus deprived

2. Neke ye nkise tne ye, ni, ta dyi so la.

of its soul, the millet becomes suitable for eating and it says: "If I were not dead, I could not be eaten; my breed cannot be lost: whether or not I am eaten, nothing can reduce me for my soul is in water" (3).

3. Ni na sale te nti dũ, n sia tise ka tunu,
ndunaw ma dũn wo, fẽ te bwona, ni be dyi la.

776 Many agrarian rituals are celebrated in order to assure Faro's pro-
241 tection. The high quality of the first fruits of the harvest offered to him indicates the importance of his role. It is in fact a payment made to him for the past harvest and in anticipation of the harvest to come.

776 He is also the guardian of the artisan's skill. The first object forged by the young blacksmith and the first spindle of thread woven by the young weaver are brought to him. Through this gesture, the individual entrusts him with both his work and his manual dexterity. After Faro has seen the work, he does not let the worker forget what he has learned and will help him perfect his skill.

Faro is a judge. Those who break the rules he has made are the object of his righteous wrath: those who are drowned or struck by lightning are always persons who have broken a taboo. Men submit most difficult cases to him as a last resort. Through the intermediary of the agents of different rituals such as the intermediary of the diviners, he answers requests and "settles the words." Most prayers
776 are addressed to him and in many cases the invocations end with his
782 name. He is omnipresent, invoked everywhere, and the seat of his power, as of all others, is the seventh heaven, to which the Bambara

771 address the following: "Seventh heaven, you are large, you are long;
772 your west is red; your east is white; your north is great; your south is black; seventh heaven, you are the king of seats among all seats, you are the great generator of the power of all powers, you are the great discoverer of all secrets, you are the source of all /55/ fortunes, you are the place where the common weal may not be destroyed; source of all things, deliver me from sin" (1).

1. Wolo flã kaba, i ka bo, i ka dyã, i kle bi ka ble, i koro ka dye, i baba ka bo, i bani ka fi; wolo flã kaba, siki yoro u la sikiyoro masa, fanga u la fanga ba sindi, gundow be ladyele fara be, nafolo be ladyele boyoro, dyẽ wari dũ bali yoro; ko be boyoro, hake tonye.

This prayer is recited by the head of the family during childbirth, a grave illness, or a death. It was also used during rituals of the enthronement of kings or chiefs.

776 Pemba and Faro, the complementary principles, were both born
772 of the spirit, miri, at the beginning of the universe. In considering the psychological aspects of their symbolic roles, one can understand why, despite the antecedence of Pemba's role, from time to time the Bambara say that "Faro is the eldest." For he represents, in the human microcosm, the will and wisdom capable of controlling the propulsion of sexual instinct as symbolized by the prolificness of the balanza as well as the violence and disorder of the emotions as expressed in Mousso Koroni's vertiginous chthonian voyage and her madness. The antithesis of the sexes, realized in the myth by the bodily separation of Pemba and Mousso Koroni, and their disagreements and quarrels which are the origin of all cosmic disorders, are compensated for by harmonious agreement and union, as established by Faro in his androgynous state. Faro is the dual vibration which, from then on, orders the universe; he is reason and moderation opposed to the overwhelming force of the balanza; he is the light of the spirit which triumphs over darkness and primordial gropings.

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Chapter 3

THE PERSON

812 The Bambara conceive of man (homo) as the principle of nature. He is "the seed of the world" and as such reflects the totality of beings and things in their essence and in their situation. Like the universe, man is life, and like life, "he is maintained by the attraction of the cardinal angels." Universe and man are each the condition of the other: the totality of things upholds the human being in his place and situation and makes him persevere within himself. Man, on the other hand, is the basis, the "raison d'être," and the cause of the universe by virtue of his consciousness and the knowledge he has of himself.

In this way the principle of duality, contained in the original creative thought and realized in the universe by the sky and the earth, is reflected in the person. The human being shows in his body the separation of the sexes necessary to the multiplication of the species —a separation, expressed in the myth of Pemba and Mousso Koroni, that shows the disorders, the difficulties, and the conflicts implicit in such a situation. But through his twin souls, the human being brings about the ideal union of the sexes as expressed in the myth of Faro's androgyny.

812 928 Moreover, these mythical personalities are present in man: Faro through the ni and the dya, Pemba through the tere and the nyama, Mousso Koroni through the wanzo. It can also be said that the peregrinations of these beings and their pursuits in time and in the mythical regions are the expression of man's psychological states such as the inner explorations and conflicts necessary to man's defining himself within himself and with respect to the rest of the creation. In other words, they are the expression of the growing consciousness of self. The whole religious and social attitude of the individual testifies to the interplay of these various forces, between which he must maintain balance and harmony.

000 /57/ In this chapter we shall examine in succession the following elements that make up or determine the person: the spiritual principles (ni, dya, tere, nyama, wanzo), the parts of the human body related to them, and certain social attributes of the individual (given name, family name, device, taboo). Finally we shall consider the cathartic role of the institution of joking relationship founded on the notion of duality.

Spiritual Principles (1)

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1. A few comments on the spiritual principles of the Bambara (in particular on the dya and the nyama) have been collected in the chapter entitled "Théorie des âmes" by Tauxier, La Religion bambara (pp. 14-25), in which the author appraises the works of the Abbé Henry and of Ch. Monteil. Some of the observations made in the following chapter have been summarized by the author in "La Personne chez les Bambara" and in "Note sur le tere chez les Bambara /Note on the Tere among the Bambara/."

It will be useful to compare this study of spiritual principles with the studies made among the Dogon and presented respectively by M. Griaule, S. de Ganay, and the author in Masques Dogon, Les Devises des Dogon, and Les Âmes des Dogon.

761 776 The Soul, ni, and the Double, dya:

[826] Faro controls the principle of life in water, which is his realm as well as the life-giving element par excellence. In the bodies of living beings, this principle has its seat in the blood. The blood of the sacrifices offered to the spirit (or failing that, the juice of the tomato, a transformation of blood) is a contribution to the reservoir of life controlled by Faro—life which he redistributes in all its forms throughout the universe. Water is the privileged element in which life may persevere indefinitely. Elsewhere, life is maintained only if water comes to nourish it.

761 776 842 833 Faro's creative function is materialized by each marital partner eating a tomato before sexual relations. This act is accompanied by the recital of a prayer. The juice of the fruit, which contains the body of the future child, transmits life according to the following mechanism:

761 776 842 824 Faro receives the offerings of tomatoes grown ritually in the consecrated fields, as well as the blood of victims slain in his name above the waters. Blood and juice, spreading over water, the fertilizing agent, are collected by the swallow, Faro's airborne messenger. Liberated in space, they return to the soil with fertilizing rain and penetrate the tomato seeds which thus contain a particle of generative power.

761 After the marital couple has absorbed the fruit, a smooth-bodied
776 embryo with nonarticulated limbs is formed in the maternal womb.
842 /58/ It is at this moment that the couple consummate the sexual act in the course of which the woman "takes into herself the entire body of her husband": the upper part through the eyes, the lower part through the genital organs. The masculine seed located in the seven principal articulations (knees, elbows, ankles, and spine) transmits them to the embryo. The body, originally similar to the body of the spirit, thus becomes that of a human being.

The spirit restows the spiritual forces after the man has mated for the second time with his wife. If the woman bears a single child it means that the man, in the course of the second union, formed the double of the first germ, but was not permitted to procreate twins.

761 Faro disposes of the child's life and nature. He decides all that the
776 child will be and will do, and determines his destiny from the moment
843 the seed is placed by him in the womb. The foetus then develops
774 with no further modifications until parturition, at which time it receives the spiritual principles, the soul, ni, and the double, dya, which will be his throughout his life. It is at this time that the inner relations of the individual to the social group to which he belongs intervene. Although Faro gives each child a new body, he animates this body with spiritual forces drawn from the family reservoir. The
[775] newborn child is the direct heir to the ni and the dya of a deceased member of the family, actually of the one, whatever one's sex, who died shortly before the birth of the child (1).

1. The reincarnation of the deceased's spiritual principles, however, is not an absolute rule. Faro is the master of an infinite reserve of souls. Twins, albinos, and certain other children are born with the ni and dya as yet undetermined. They originate respectively in the second sky (kaba dye) and in water (dyi sumale). Further study on this particular point is necessary to complete this investigation.

761 The consequence of death was, in effect, to separate the corpse
776 from the forces that animated it. The ni, by appropriate ritual, had
774 been preserved on the altar of the ancestors (2), and the dya had left
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2. Grouped hierarchally, children, male adults, and women form religious societies or institutions, dyo. Each dyo is charged with the upkeep of altars which serve to preserve the spiritual forces of the group. (See p.

the dying man to go into the water and place itself under Faro's protection. At the moment of delivery, both ni and dya return to the body of the newborn child who replaces the dead man, but they return in reversed order: the dya is returned to the body of the child and becomes his ni; the ni of the deceased mixes with the birth water spread on the ground which forms the shadow (suma) and will be his double, the twin (1). In the case of a boy, the dya will be female; in the

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1. The blood of childbirth represents the excess tomato juice absorbed by the woman, that which remains in the womb after the formation of the embryo. On the eighth day after birth, the mother of the parturient woman squeezes three or four tomatoes (depending on the sex of the newborn) into a gourd which she then gives to the child's father. The latter makes his wife drink the juice to replace the blood which she has lost and which is considered impure.

case /59/ of a girl, it will be male. These movements are independent of the sex of the deceased as the spirit reverses the sexes when necessary. Each human being is thus both male and female through his soul and his double. This conception of human nature, which is fundamental to the Bambara, is expressed in the symbolism of numbers. The number seven is formed of three (male sexual symbol) and four (female sexual symbol) and represents the complete man. In addition, on another level, the number six is that of male twins, seven that of mixed twins (and the hermaphrodite), and eight that of female twins. The body of the newborn child is gently tapped by the number of strokes representing the above figures in order to call the child's ni according to its sex.

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714 827 The ni, which animates the body, is visible during the weeks following birth in the movements of the fontanel. It is also the breath, the respiration, the beating of the arteries. Like the dya, it is not indissolubly bound to the body for it leaves it during sleep in order to go to the sixth sky, sunankaba. When the person awakens, the ni returns [828] to the body and the dream is considered a memory of what it has seen, a premonition of an event concerning the individual, the family, or the village (1).

[787] 1. Great numbers of fish seen in a dream foretell an abundant catch; quarrelling signifies war; to swim suggests purification for an offense. The passage of crickets from west to east is the sign of a great battle or famine. In this last instance, the situation is so serious that the village is forewarned and each one must make an offering to a needy person saying these words: "I make this soul sacrifice to God in order that he save me (nye nin ye ni sakaka ye ka ngala ma a la ka mbo)." The village chief also offers a collective sacrifice.

714 The dya, the double or twin of the human being and its opposite sex, has a body: either the shadow on the ground or the image in the water. It may move alone or be forced to leave the person it is accompanying under Faro's order. When a crocodile carries off or wounds a man by order of the spirit, he first seizes his visible shadow on the surface of the water and his dya in the water. The same thing may be attempted by someone with evil intentions. In such a case the close contact which the dya as a shadow maintains with the impure earth makes it particularly vulnerable. In order to remedy this, the person concerned must look at himself in the water contained in a gourd; then, when his image is clear, he clouds it by tipping the receptacle; this puts the dya under Faro's protection.

/60/ The independence and vulnerability of the dya require, in the course of certain religious functions, that it be taken over by Faro for the duration of the ceremony.

Wild and domestic animals are endowed with a ni and a dya. Plants also have a ni. The ni of trees is situated in the buds and insures its growth and its life; that of cereals necessary to human life

774 is the object of constant concern during agrarian rituals. The role of the soul of plants is particularly noticeable in their medicinal uses. Drawing a remedy from a plant may cause its death, liberating its spiritual principles for the benefit of the sick man. Because of this, such an act is equated with a blood sacrifice.

With the exception of the ngovo tomato, plants have no dya. The shadow (suma) of a plant is not independent like that of a man or an animal. It exists only through light effects and its movements are caused by the air and the wind moving its leaves and branches. This is what the Bambara means when he says that the dya has a life of its own and depends on Faro, whereas the plant's suma depends on the spirit Téliko, master of the air.

774 787 804 843 An individual's dya can be known and his temperament and life possibilities assessed by measuring his shadow on the earth at noon. The unit employed is the little finger, which is a corporeal symbol of the person. If a pregnant woman is thus measured, the sex of the child may be predicted.

774 [576] When a boy or a girl gets married, it is said of them: a ye a dya furu: "he (or she) has married his dya." For it is impolite to say that a person married anyone but his spiritual double. Besides, the union of the couple is repeated by the union of their dya which like themselves are of opposite sex. In olden times, male twins married the [595 851] same woman and the latter's dya was taken over by Faro in the Niger. The child she conceived was the son of both husbands.

589 791 Some men do not marry. This is true of the Soma, the religious diviner attached to the major Bambara societies. Initiated in the course of a solitary sojourn in the bush, he left his dya with the invisible spirits. This is a prerequisite to the gift of double sight with which he is endowed as well as a protection against possible dangers to the dya when it remains in contact with the earth, or when it approaches other humans. The true spouse of the Soma is his dya: he may mate only with it on a fixed date when the spirits return it to him for this purpose. /61/

The tere

774 The tere was inflicted by Pemba on Mousso Koroni in order to diminish her power at the time he was pursuing her. This explains its complexity: it is at once the character of a man, his strength,

774 his consciousness, as well as that part of his being which, through the body, makes him sensitive to events. If man is vulnerable through his double, it is his tere that is affected by any breaking of taboos; it receives and submits to impurity.

1824 The tere has its seat in the blood and the head (kun tere). It develops in the foetus in the course of gestation and is composed in part of the parents' tere to which is added that of the deceased person whose soul and double the child has inherited.

774 The appearance of the child's tere is determined by the old men
553 of the family in the course of the name-giving ceremony which takes
787 place publicly on the eighth day after birth. After carefully examining the child's hairline along the forehead, the manner in which his eyebrows join, the shape of his eyes (the seat of intelligence), mouth, hands, and feet, one of the old men present announces in a loud voice the revealing signs of his character. The position of these signs makes it possible to say whether a child has a good or a bad tere and to make predictions about his life. A slight bald spot on the middle of his head will make him a rich man; a wide and deep skull will make him a chief. The old man then swings the child in the direction of the four cardinal points above the family altars and gives him the first name of the deceased person whose ni and dya he has inherited. Some of the hair, shaved off shortly before, is then thrown into the Niger by the father who pronounces the name while facing the river. The gesture and the word are meant to entrust the tere to the spirit of the waters and to ask his protection. On the same day the blacksmith marks out on the child's face the scarifications that act on his tere, giving him strength, courage, and virtue.

774 As the child grows, certain of his physical peculiarities are inter-
787 preted as characteristics of his tere. If he grinds his teeth while
828 sleeping it means he will attack his parents; if he often takes hold of his left wrist with his right hand he will always be victorious. A girl who walks swinging her hands and throwing them behind and who raises dust with her feet while walking will destroy her husband's fortune. Some informants say that a person has several tere: /62/ one for his manner of walking, one for the way he carries his head, one for the shape of his limbs, and one for the breasts if the person is a woman (1).

1. The physical signs determining the tere are very numerous. On this subject see

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828 D. Traore. "Le Tere chez les Bambara du Ségou /The Tere among the Bambara of Ségou/," Notes africaines, January 1947, pp. 29-31.

774 Man is considered the bearer of a strong tere. Because he talks, is well informed, and knows good from evil, he is responsible for his own life and that of his family. The tere is the gaining of consciousness.

774 This aspect of the tere means that only domestic animals, whose life depends on man, are bearers of this principle. Wild animals
825 "have a hard and barren life; they have to labor to feed themselves; so they do not have to bear the burden of a tere." All that lives independently of man is without a tere. (1)

1. However, according to certain informants, wild animals might also be endowed with several tere for different parts of the body. In this case, it would seem that the term designates especially the animal's physical peculiarities and not its consciousness, as in the case of man and domestic animals.

The tere of domestic animals is not as powerful as that of man, but is also revealed by external signs. For instance, a horse that swings its head from right to left while it is tied up has a very bad tere; it is said to be its duga fufa (2). Such a beast is undesirable in

2. Literally, "the swaying of the hawk." It is said that when a hawk descends on its prey, it swings its head right and left in order to see the prey better.

a home for it "chases away happiness and success." A wounded domestic animal attacks its enemy with its tere.

774 The fact that the tere is that part of the person which suffers the
784 consequences of impurity testifies to the bonds that unite man to the
827 outer world. The tere is disturbed when a taboo, tne, is broken. If it is a good tere, it leaves the person; if it is a bad one, it becomes worse. On the other hand, the brezking of a taboo provokes a physiological change in the blood which loses its red color and becomes

774 pale. It is manifested by a loss of strength and by illnesses affecting
784 the body openings: the man becomes blind and deaf-mute. He may
827 also become paralyzed. Generally he does not die but is pursued by ills until he purifies himself.

774 In addition, the tere changes when it is detached from its normal support; it then becomes nyama, a force which acts outside the body. Manifest in action, the fact can already be sensed in the spoken word, the bearer of nyama which immediately affects /63/ the person to whom it is addressed. The consequences of this action of the word are manifold.

761 At the time of death, the tere is completely liberated. Transformed
774 into nyama which leaves the body, it then becomes a very active
778 form which, in certain cases, can attack whomever it considers responsible for the death (1).

1. This very visible but incomplete aspect of the nyama is the one that has been most studied heretofore. On this subject, see the works of the Abbé Henry, Ch. Monteil, H. Labouret, L. Tauxier. Furthermore, in the sky, in space, and on earth, there is a nyama independent of the tere. The nature of this general and vital element has not been completely clarified by investigation.

774 Sacrificial beings, men or animals, or plants for ritual use never
778 release a dangerous nyama. Their spiritual principles and forces are channeled in the course of the ritual and directed toward the benefit of a supernatural power through the altar. The same is true of domestic animals immolated for consumption, in which case their forces are used over again and their death causes no disorder since it was foreseen by Faro's law concerning food.

On the other hand, the nyama of the bush animals (nyama baka) leave their dead bodies and pursue the hunter (2). To protect himself

2. The sick man may be treated in the following manner: seven (or a multiple of seven) cowrie shells are thrown upon the hide of the animal

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as an offering, which implies an apology with the understanding that the guilty man is given as many blows as there are cowrie shells offered. Next, the hide is soaked in water and washed. It is then secured so that it may not once again run away into the bush. These various operations are performed as often as necessary and until the crisis is over. On the other hand, this purification may be performed as often as necessary, but cannot be renewed in the case of a broken taboo.

the hunter carries an altar, dɔzoboli, suspended from his shoulder. Into it the animal's strength is channeled the moment it dies.

Every individual is, therefore, constantly faced during his lifetime with this active force which is liberated by the word, by certain acts, and by death. He must be in a position to fend off danger, to maintain his own tere which will help him if it is good, but which may on the contrary join the enemy forces and help them in their destruction if it is evil. Therefore, in the latter case the individual tries to change it by seeking the assistance and advice of the Komo diviner. But whatever happens, each individual, whether he wishes it or not, endures the attacks and the presence of numerous and varied nyama, because he has destroyed plants, trodden on insects, and wounded other living beings. Thus, he is at all times the bearer of displaced life forces that are foreign to him. Moreover, these forces find their way /64/ through him to all that he touches. He becomes a center of influences which first exert their action on his person and which he must take into account to maintain his integrity (1).

1. Although this feeling is very distinct in the mind of the Bambara, it does not make him inactive. The responsibility is only serious in the case of a voluntary act of useless destruction. In all other cases, the rites counteract the inconveniences. The Bambara are responsible, but free.

The wanzo

718 The wanzo, an evil force created in the beginning by Mousso
304 Koroni's impurity, was caused by the curse, of which she was the object after her betrayal, and which she communicated to the earth during her underground journey. After she had maimed herself on Pemba while having sexual relations with him, her jealousy pushed her into avenging herself on the women who mated with the balanza. Her madness and despair prompted her to pursue her betrayal to the very end. With nails and teeth she excised and circumcised the men and women she met during her travels. The wanzo she carried about thus penetrated the human species, making the operation necessary for all those to follow. Faro could not remedy this, but his protection is invoked for each child during the operation. The headdress of the circumcised symbolizes the sky and the purifying light.

At birth, each child receives the wanzo, "the word of Mousso Koroni," in its blood and on its skin at the moment of contact with the earth on which it is born. This force, also called kono nyama, "the nyama of the inside," is not to be confused with the tere but is of the same nature and is transmitted to everything the bearer touches.
[826] Its seat is mostly in the foreskin of the man and the clitoris of the woman, and it represents the disorder in the individual: "it makes man such that he can live with no one, can stand no one, and cannot stand himself." In addition, it is opposed to fertility.

In order to become a stable individual, to marry, procreate, and to sacrifice, the child must be rid of his wanzo. This is achieved in the course of circumcision or excision and in the rituals that end the seclusion of those operated upon. The greatest part of its force runs into the earth with the blood of the mutilated organ. The rest of it escapes with the smoke of the fire over which the children jump (three or four times according to their sex) before returning to their homes. The act of abandoning their /65/ old clothes and putting on new ones at that time confirms their new status. But the wanzo does not disappear; it is channeled into the masks of the ndomo society to which the uncircumcised belong (1). Similarly, when a child dies before being

1. See p. 222.

circumcised, appropriate rituals have the effect of channeling the

778 wanzo and directing it into the mask to prevent it from doing harm
304 (1). Thus, nothing of the individual forces is lost. The wanzo itself

1. See p. 256.

harmful at the beginning, when properly channeled and directed, serves to consolidate the collective energies of the infantile societies based on it.

Only when an adolescent has lost his wanzo is he permitted to marry;
[582] any individual would refuse to marry a partner who is not completely rid of it.

The Body

826 The Bambara have a notion of their bodies and the role of the different parts and organs. This notion is all the deeper because it is linked to that of the spiritual principles that animate it.

Indeed, the tere is determined by certain visible aspects of the body, while the ni and the dya also have sexes like the body. Therefore any study should include the links that unite the spiritual elements to the physical body in order to understand properly its state and function.

Blood, which together with breath is the seat of life, is also the vehicle of physical and spiritual forces that circulate with it in the veins and arteries. The blood sacrifice liberates these forces which sustain the altars, the soil, and the beings who receive them. Certain alliances are consecrated by an exchange of blood. The clear color of blood is proof of its purity: all infractions bring about a
[841] change and cause it to become pale. Menstrual blood, testimony to Mousso Koroni's impurity and of the momentary sterility of women, is the principal taboo of the supernatural powers that create and protect life.

826 The head, which contains thought, is an essential part of the in-
828 dividual and his symbol: "the head of the members of society" is
827 represented by a stroke in the course of the rituals performed by members of the Komo or the Kworé. Man grows through his head just as a plant "grows through its head bud" (2). Man's head is protected

2. The myth mentions the "head of the balanza" at the time that men broke the

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taboo by cutting its buds (see p. 43). The altars of the fields and of agricultural societies, too, watch over the "head of the millet."

/66/ and purified in order to maintain his health and prosperity. It is the seat of consciousness and will, and receives a share of the scarifications made at birth, which will exercise influence on the person.

826 Hair contains an important part of the individual's ni. It is therefore dangerous to mix it with the hair of another, for that would create a vital and indissoluble bond between the two parties. To burn it is equivalent to making an attempt on one's own life. It is buried or placed in a deep hole in the wall of the house for protection (1).

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1. Many charms and magic spells are based on hair. In order to be loved by a woman, a man must mix some of her hair with his and place it under his head at night with a prayer. In order to keep his job, an employee does the same with his hair and that of his employer; he then sacrifices a victim over the ensemble so that the employer cannot fire him without risking his own life.

Hair and the pilose system play a part in the myth and were used to count the age of primitive men until the advent of death on earth. All the ancestors represented in the sanctuaries are bearded and hairy. Their appearance shows that, having become mortal, they lived at a time when rejuvenation no longer existed.

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827 The pupil is the fundamental part of the eye. Its name, nyemani, "little person of the eye" (2), expresses its function. The pupil re-

2. Man's pupil, according to information that is still obscure, was made with that of the serpent and was also called nye mani sa, "serpent of the little person of the eye."

flects and absorbs the person it sees. The image is a kind of double,

826 827 a replica of the person seen, the double being received and preserved by the seer with the help of the registering mechanism of the eye. It is with his eyes that Faro inscribes in his memory the number of beings under his domination. It is through the eyes as well as through the genitals that woman is united to her husband during the sexual act. The individual who has broken a taboo is affected first through the eyes: he suffers from pains or becomes blind according to the degree of his offense.

The nose is the canal of man's breath or, respiration, ni na kle (literally, soul that ascends and descends), a term describing the very movement of life. The seat of breath is the solar plexus, kwa nye, "eye of the chest," also said to be ni dyuru ba, "the great rope of the soul." When Faro decides to take back the life of a man, he carries him off into the water and returns his corpse with the nose and the navel cut up. The mutilation of the nose reminds all that, as the master /67/ of the guilty man's life, he takes it away from him by taking away his breath.

The mouth and the tongue play a part in all the rites and symbols concerning the person. The voice is "in the throat" but man talks with the mouth. The word is a creator, an act; it carries a force, nyama, which inhabits the mouth, permeates the tongue and saliva, and transmits itself to everything it touches. It is Faro's word passing through the mouth, the word received in suffering in mythical times, which integrates the human species with the new order established in the creation.

Its organ is the tongue which, when represented in ritual objects, symbolizes it (1). Its vehicle is saliva: to spit is to give one's word,

1. The prayers recited during the initiation rites allude to the formidable nyama of the initiates' tongues.

to seal an oath. The old men spit on seeds, after having promised an offering to the Komo; the sacrificing priest, before the libation, spits prechewed kola nuts onto the altar. Husband and wife spit their marriage oath. The power of the mouth finds its most powerful expression in the griot's recitation of the device (2).

2. See p. 112.

826 827 The mouth and tongue, ejectors of the word, can be compared in importance to the ear, a receptive organ. It is through the ear that man receives and remembers the word. Its role is comparable to that of the sex organs which eject life and receive it. The ear in itself has both sexes: male by its auricle, female by its orifice. This duality expresses the basic duality of man. That is why the corpse of [764] an uncircumcised man is sometimes amputated at the ear rather than at the foreskin.

826 301 Because of the symbolism of its shape and because of its function, the ear is adorned. Men formerly wore three copper rings on the right ear and four on the left, the number seven representing the complete being, male and female, ni and dya. Women wear four rings on each auricle or, if they can, twenty-two, which represent the twenty-two stages of creation, or the twenty-two generative categories. Sometimes, for both men and women, a single ring attached to the earlobe represents the mother of the other rings (1).

[178]

1. In olden times, men and women wore cowrie shells on their ears in the place of copper rings, a custom which would seem to be still respected in certain villages today. These shells played the same part as copper.

827 191 301 776 But the role of this adornment goes much further. As symbol of the word, it is through the ornaments that the spirit Téliko, master of sound, hears what /68/ is said to man. They attract sound and send it back to Téliko and Faro, who thus judge the acts and words of men. To wear earrings did not originally mean to adorn oneself, but to hear the spirits as well as to force them to hear what was said (2). Its second effect is to embarass the liar, the bearer of false news

2. Rings placed on musical instruments have the same purpose and also symbolize those worn by men. See p. 282.

or evil words, by putting him in the position of being understood by the invisible, therefore of being judged by them. A pleasant or well-intentioned word benefits the one to whom it is addressed and this

827 191 381 776 gain is felt as a contribution to the beneficial nyama. "The spirit Téliko transforms the air emitted by the speaker into favorable nyama; upon hearing a good word, it would be necessary to stop one's ears so that this nyama does not leave the person who received it." Moreover, if a person opens his eyes wide while watching the speaker, "the latter's nyama is able to penetrate the body of the listener" and spread within it as a reviving tide. While this takes place, the good word saturates the air, helping the action of breathing, hence the life, of the listener. "One breathes," says an informant, "with the nyama of the words which enter through the eyes and ears." But this process is not one-sided. The good nyama returns to the speaker through his own eyes while he is looking at the other person. He is reflected in the person with whom he is talking and it is as though he were talking to himself. There is a beneficial exchange even when only one of the two actors speaks.

Inversely, a bad word or an insult upsets the listener and rebounds, acting upon the insulting person. This harmonious arrangement summarizes precisely and powerfully the universal movement, principle of life and strength for all beings. It comprises an individual movement provoked by the word which acts upon the body by developing and regularizing the rhythm of breathing, and a collective movement set off by the return of the word to the speaker. Because of the effect of the spoken word, exchanges are established that are favorable both to the rhythm of individual breathing and to the equilibrium of universal life. This effect is not limited to words in the strict sense; sight enjoys the same prerogatives as hearing and diction. If an object [431] belonging to a certain person is seen and coveted by another, the owner cannot refuse to give it to him. The act of seeing has established by itself, between the stranger and the object, a bond which is affectively stronger than that of ownership.

836 The articulated parts of the human body are just as meaningful as the head. The bones, more lasting than the flesh /69/ and a testimony, in the grave, of the life that has passed, are its foundation and framework.

The navel is the central point of the articulations: that is why Faro, when he drowns a person, returns the body after having slit the nose and navel. This double mutilation shows that he has reclaimed the head and the body of the guilty man. The articulations are the indication of man's condition in the new order. Where he was once

826 immortal with smooth limbs, he became mortal and hard working. As seats of the male semen, they transmit this condition to the embryo, formed in the maternal womb by Faro. The weariness felt in the limbs after the sexual act is proof of this transmission. As locus of
[859] the virile semen, framework of the man, and a mechanism suitable for physical labor, the articulations are also the symbol of society. The chief's throne, in the shape of a knee, is the image of its owner's articulated body as well as that of the armature of the social body and of the grouping of individuals under his jurisdiction (1).

1. See p. 178.

826 The limbs represent the right and the left. Rectitude, firmness,
823 and directed action are "right"; incertitude, the spirit of indecision,
201 and inconsistency in behavior are "left." The right is male and symbolizes man's labor; the other is female. All gestures, profane and religious, and all representations of objects bear witness to this. Performing his first task in the fields before the rain, the farmer gives three blows with his hoe held in his left hand in order to absorb the impurity of the earth. After this, he works until the harvest with his right hand. To cross one's hands means supplication, to put them behind one's back means humiliation.

826 Each finger has its value. The little finger, bolokoni lakare, is
201 "the son of the other fingers" and in it is concealed the entire
576 strength of the hand; it "carries the nyama of the fingers." Hence its use as a measure of divinations. To point to someone with one's little finger means to belittle him with respect to those present. Thus one casts a spell (korti) against an enemy or an undesirable person with the little finger.

826 The index finger and the thumb of a chief, formerly those of a
622 king, are marked on certain occasions with signs called bolo ti doniya, "knowledge of the signs of the hand." On the index are drawn three "acts of the world today" (bi dyẽ walew) and on the thumb, two "things of the interior of the secret world" (dyẽ gundo kono fẽw), for it is said that "the knowledge of the signs of the hand /70/ is the road of the creation 5, the index is the world in 3 and the thumb is the new world" (1). The whole represents the worlds thought out by

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1. Bolo ti doniya ye dali duru sira ye, bolokoni kumba dɔ̀ga ye dyɛ̀ saba gundo ye, tyemasa bolokoni ye dyɛ̀ dura ye.

yo, of which only the first is realized (2).

2. On the worlds thought out by yo, see pp. 23-26.

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On another level, the signs of the thumb are related to powers and those of the index to royal domains (fig. 1, nos. 8-12):[1]

1. Sign zero (fu) represents the beginning of creation, the origin of all things. A curved segment extended from left to right denotes the dynamic quality of the universe. It is intersected by a multiplication sign expressing the infinite development of beings and things. But the vertical stroke crossing it on the left indicates both the cessation and the suppression of the whole (no. 11).

2. Sign of lightning. It expresses royal power and justice and is traced under the thumb ring of the king. The latter, when giving an order, would swing his hand, which means he is swinging lightning before those he addresses (no. 12).

3. Sign of the royal domain. The opening asserts the possible extension of the kingdom; the transversal bar is a protection of this kingdom from all destruction (no. 8).

4. Sign of the extension of this domain at the tree cardinal sides: east, west, and south (no. 9).

5. Sign of union. The oval represents the whole group of functionaries called tɔ̀dyɔ̀ and barodɛ̀, officers and councilors who administer the kingdom under the king's authority (no. 10).

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[783]

As the feet are constantly in touch with the soil, they take on its impurity. An individual who has gone through severe purifications will need to avoid putting his feet on the ground during a period of time occasionally quite prolonged, for "to place one's toes on the ground is to put one's soul in contact with the impure earth" (1). It

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1. The invention of the shoe is mythically linked to the notion of the earth's impurity; the wearer must therefore avoid this contact.

[422, category 116 — Analyst.]

826 is also through the feet that a part of man's strength is deposited in the sweepings and rubbish upon which he treads. Their role as receptacles appears in the rituals concerning household refuse and the dirt on roads and paths.

Like the little finger, the small toe symbolizes the whole person. [301] It is sometimes adorned with a silver ring, symbol of the word, which recalls that man's body is the seat of the word extended within him from head to feet (1).

1. In olden times the ring on the small toe was made of red nyama fiber (nyama fu), which played the same role as metal.

831 The notion of the bisexuality of human beings is fundamental:
826 the spiritual principles are sexed like the body, whose ambivalence /71/ is evident during childhood: the boy is feminine in his foreskin; the girl is masculine in her clitoris. One of the aims of circumcision [304] and excision is to help the child attain the sex to which it is apparently destined by removing the organ of the opposite sex. (2). But the

[171] 2. The same conception is found among the Dogon; see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 185.

initial duality of the soul and body is the very foundation of the human being. He is complete only if he originally received it, and he retains it even after the operation imposed by physical and social life, [774] for the soul of the opposite sex, though diminished in the body, remains present in the shadow, the dya. He also rediscovers his dual unity when he marries. A married couple are a unit for their dya [581] join as do their bodies in an act which is not merely physical and which realizes the ideal union of twins.

831 The sex to which one belongs dominates one's whole existence on
801 earth. Objects and tools bear masculine or feminine marks, according to the rules of the division of labor. The numbers three (man) and four (woman) are abridged forms of the sex. "Primitive men" who, according to the Bambara expressed themselves mostly by gestures and signs, engraved their rare objects with the number of

831 lines or dots depending upon the sex of those who used them. Thus,
801 women marked their spindles with four lines whereas men twisted three threads on their shuttles.

826 On the metaphysical level, man's body, "the seed of the world," is identified with the cereal grain. The Bambara separate cereal
824 grains into seven parts, corresponding to a division of the human
812 organs into seven groups (1). Man and grain are one and identical in

1. The divisions of the grain are as follows: kungu, "little beard of millet," involucre; fara dye, "white bark," glume and glumales; fara fi, "black bark," bran and protein aceous bark; fara mugu, "farinaceous bark" (which corresponds to a milky diastatic zone); mugu dunta, "flour for eating," starch; kolo dye, "white bone," embryo; kise de, "son of grain," the micropyle from which the rootlet issues at the time of germination. The classification of organs in relation to these divisions is under study. We thank M. Pitot of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire for the identification of the parts of the grain corresponding to the native divisions. In certain villages, grains undergo a process of hulling and the determined elements only are used in the making up of the ritually offered millet mash.

[72]

their substance. On the other hand, the basic foods, that is, the eight principal cereals, are symbolically present in the collarbones (kolo kalanjiri, or ka kolo). Man carries within him his subsistance, and its location reflects the person's general condition (2). As proof

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2. See p. 53, n. 2.

of /72/ man's spiritual integrity, these grains leave him when he is in a state of impurity. He is then drained of his substance and subsistence. Thepurpose of purification is to reestablish this wholeness.

812 Moreover, the bonds which unite the whole person, body and
561 spiritual principles, to the cosmos, are made clear by the fact that

812 561 man's life passes through seven successive ages corresponding to the seven skies, the seven earths, the seven waters, and the seven stages of millet growth. The seven ages are: bilakoro, "an uncircumcised person"; kemẽkoro "a circumcised person of the last age grade"; tyebalẽ, literally, a big man; masẽlẽ, literally, a successful person; makoroba, literally, an elderly person; madeselẽ, literally, a person who cannot succeed, an old man; mabalẽ, an impotent old man.

812 561 796 These bonds are also confirmed annually for everybody in the course of the ritual called "the renewal of the year." By renewing the cardinal points, the Bambara add to the strength of these poles of attraction which are responsible for maintaining things within themselves and with respect to each other. At the same time they proceed to a "revival of the body and soul," including all from the youngest to the oldest. For the year to come, they take a fresh breath, a new life, and submit the body to internal and external purifications, making it adequate to fulfill its role.

Effects of Death on the Person

761 The first effect of death is to dissociate the elements that make up the person. The religious practices, imbued with respect for these elements, aim at organizing their preservation in order that they may not be lost to the deceased, to society, and finally, to Faro who controls life and assures the survival of souls.

The dya remains in the water where it will be kept until the birth of a child. But the ni, which escapes from the body with the last breath, is watched for by the head of the family who catches it and carries it to an altar. As we have seen above, it will return to animate the dya of the child who will inherit the deceased's spiritual principles, leaving behind it on the altar, a kind of exuvia, mana or folo, as a sign of the deceased's sojourn on earth.

The tere becomes transformed at death; liberated from the body, it becomes nyama which escapes and which may sometimes attack the living. Proof of this is the fear aroused by the sight of a corpse. /73/ It would seem that the tere's combination of strength and character is expressed by the activity of the nyama; but it is really dangerous only in the case of violent death (the murder of a man or an animal). In this case the nyama attacks the responsible party. If death is natural, the nyama, like the ni, is directed by the relatives and placed on the family altar (pembele) in the course of the

761 funeral rites. There it joins the ancestral forces, the aggregate of which forms a whole whose power is used by the descendants during the seasonal rituals for beneficial purposes.

764 761 The body is buried; it "belongs to the termites" and in the end only the bones will remain and be honored as a testimony of the physical life. Sometimes they are removed from the tomb, examined, and prayed to before being replaced.

761 844 When a birth occurs in the family the newborn child, having inherited the ni and the dya of the deceased, receives his nyama preserved in the pembele and his given name, toko; thus one being replaces another, using the same forces which are used over again and again. Life transmits itself intact. Not only is it undiminished by death, but the dya's sojourn in Faro's residence is thought to be a "reviving," a desirable and beneficial purification. Similarly, the passing of the ni onto the family altars brings about a rejuvenation.

761 On the altars and in the tombs, the "exuviae and bones counted and classified by Faro," are a valid testimony for eternity and serve to maintain the integrity of the whole world of living and dead until the final resurrection.

Attributes of the Person

The Name

551 The organization of the total family /famille indivise/ of the Bambara has already been the object of descriptive works (1). It is

1. In particular Ch. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali; H. Labouret, Les Manding et leur langue /The Malinke and their Language/.

however, appropriate to mention it since certain elements such as family names, devices, taboos, and kinship relationships described as "joking" are related to the components of the person.

Socially, the person is first placed by his given name, toko, that of the ancestor who gave him his ni and his dya, or any other in the paternal or maternal line. The given name indicates the relation to a family group as well as /74/ the person's individuality. It is accompanied by the father's family name (dyamu), whose origin and

55/etymology are often associated with an historical event (1). The most

1. On the historical aspects of the dyamu, see P. Humblot, Du nom propre et des appellations chez les Malinké; M. Delafosse, Des soi-disant clans totémiques de l'Afrique occidentale /The So-called Totemic Clans of West Africa/, Ch. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali.

familiar names are derived from those of the mythical families (2).

[TT3]

2. The Bambara myth mentions family names that were determined by Faro when he classified beings and things. It is still generally said of this event: "When Faro travelled, he broke the support for Mousso Koroni, and an agreement as to names was made by him" (faro tama na muso koroni ɲigi kari la, dyama dyamy ko la dili kera faro fɛ).

On the other hand it must be noted that a dyamu, which applies to a great number of total families living in various regions, is not always reserved for the Bambara groups only. The dyamu Kouloubali, for example, also belongs to certain Somono and some blacksmiths. This means that a dyamu is not only attributed to a family in its broadest meaning, but also to people apparently unrelated to it. Another typical fact makes it impossible for us to give the term "family" the meaning it has in our societies: a person changes his name when he leaves his country. A Dogon becomes Keyta when he goes to live in Mandé. A Bambara Traoré, if he goes to the land of the Wolof, becomes a Diop (3). Finally, an important family may

3. An investigation of this very important aspect of Sudanese social organization remains to be made.

have several names and devices.

551 Bearing a name confers on the bearer the obligation of respecting a taboo (tne or tana). He may neither kill nor, more especially, eat the animal or the plant that represents his name; any infraction of this rule affects his physical and spiritual integrity.

551 602 On the other hand, relationships commonly known as "joking-relationships" are established between families respecting different taboos and bearing different names. One of the characteristic aspects of this kind of alliance is the fact that members of one family are in the habit of carrying out purification rites for members of the other in case a taboo is broken.

551 173 Stories relating the origin of family names are well known and there are several versions that have been published for the principal families (1). Some of these bring out not only the history of the head

1. See among others L. Tauxier. La Religion bambara, pp. 119ff.

of the family, the first-named, but at the same time the origin of the taboo /75/ attached to the name or the origin of the kinship ties observed by the bearers of the name with members of another family.

In this respect, one of the versions concerning the Kouloubali is most suggestive:

"The Kouloubali are descended from a family called kuludyu which lived in an underground village in a place called kuluba (literally, big mountain) in Mandé. A famine which lasted for fifty-two years hit the region; the people did not know what to do and ate the leaves of trees in order to survive.

Two friends, called Konyo (literally, marriage) and Mbadun (literally, I eat), left their homes and set out on a trip to find food. They met three men and decided to join forces with them in order to escape this painful situation. Upon returning to the village, the newcomers, noticing the excrement of a hyena, joked about its white color: "You have only been eating bones," they said. "But no," laughingly answered the other two, "it is hyena excrement." And they asked their new friends their names, adding that they themselves had none. Then together, they tried to make a fire. One night they noticed a flame apparently coming out of the branches of a kapok tree. The tree grew near a rock and the wind, by making

551/173 its branch rub against the stone, caused sparks which ignited the kapok. They then rubbed two pieces of wood against each other and managed to light a fire which they kept burning for six months. They jealously guarded their secret; men, some of whom still knew nothing of fire and who were in the habit of drying their meat in the sun, came to ask them for burning coals and gave them millet, salt, and domestic animals in exchange. They also gave them their daughters in marriage. One of the men, who belonged to the Diara family, asked them their family names. They answered that they had none. "What does that matter?" he replied. "You will live on a great mountain and take the name of Kouloubali." They then asked the name of their ally (senãnku). "We have none," said the new men, "but since this famine we have been living with friends."

They then decided to celebrate the marriage of Konyo with Diara's daughter and a new alliance (senãnkuya) was arranged between the two families. Later on, other members of the Diara family came to live with them, and a prosperous village grew up where the Kouloubali lived.

As their numbers had grown, the men decided to go to war to gain other arable lands. They vanquished the Toucouleurs /Tokulor/ of the Ségou region and ended up by taking the town, which they entered as conquerors.

One of the phrases of their device: kulubali kulu dyã tasuma /76/ "Kouloubali of the fire of the great mountain" is a reminder of both their geographical origin and their fortune.

The Device

551 A device, barama, is generally attached to a name and, when pronounced, has the same kind of effective communication (1). Its

1. We refer the reader to the work of Mme. Solange de Ganay, Les Devises des Dogon, in which this important institution has been studied at length and commented upon. The characteristics of Bambara devices are similar. Without taking up the whole problem, it is appropriate here to define the effect of these devices on the person according to the Bambara concept.

551 course within the individual who hears it, its effect on him, and the return effect on the individual reciting it are all developed according to a known mechanism.

The barama, a word which may be translated as "encouragement," "compliment," or "flattery," is a narrative, usually in poetic form, relating the origin of the name and the exploits of the ancestors (1).

[576] 1. The device, in its entirety, is generally known only to the griot, but certain parts of it, certain traditional phrases known to all, are used as a greeting to its owner.

551 539 Thus one of the elements of the Diara device bears witness to the role of their ancestors:

"Diara, Zan of Nyaola, Yayiri of Nyaola, your grandfather curved the world like a sickle, straightened it out like a straight road; grandson of God on earth, Diara!" (2)

2. Dyara, nyaola za, nyaola yayiri, i moke ye ka dye kuru i ko woloso ka foni i ko sira tike nindye; duguma ngala modẽ, dyara. Nyaola is a village. The name of Zan is always given to the eldest son in a family. The word dyara also means lion.

Another element exalts their courage in battle:

"Diara, Koné: if there is not a Koné among the warriors who will fight, the troop will be beaten (in advance). The lion has broken a great bone" (3).

3. Dyara, kone, kone čẽ kele te kele min oye fele ye; dyara ye kolo ba kari. Koné is another of the Diara's dyamu; fele describes a group of men gathered together for the hunt or for war.

The Tangara device also recalls their history and their victories:

"Descendants of Falé, Kwonda, Méné: other brave men purchased their right to sit in the village; we, brave men, won it with our bow and arrows" (4).

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4. Fale kwonda mene siw, tow bomaw ye dugu sa ka sigi, aw bemaw ya soro ni to ani kala. Falé, Kwonda, and Méné are the names of ancestors. The device is that of the Tangara of the village of Barbé.

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Moreover, the device also carries a statement of the bearer's genealogy, burudyu (1). To say this genealogy is equivalent to

1. The word si, meaning race, is used to indicate the burudyu, which is comparable to the dambe of the Peul of Mopti.

"attacking the /77/ ancestors." To speak of them, to quote them, and to tell their exploits honors them and pacifies them. In the course of the recitation "the air emitted by the speaker" is transformed by the power of the spirit, Teliko, into coolness which penetrates the ancestors (2). The same is true for supernatural powers. As soon as

2. Teliko ba sumaya se u ma. "Téliko makes coolness come to them."

the Komo chief recites Faro's burudyu, "the air coming out of the chief's mouth is transformed into good nyama which penetrates Faro's body through his pupils and ears."

To tell a man his burudyu is to honor him greatly. He thinks of his ancestors, their fortune, and their glory; he is proud to be descended from them and is incited to do as well or better than they. The effect of the "good word" described above is due to the indirect but powerful action of the ancestors (3). The recitation by a third

3. However the soul (ni) of the cited ancestors is neither called upon nor displaced by the recitation. It is the vital force, nyama, which is put into motion here.

party has the effect of maintaining the individual in his being, of making him persevere by affirming it (4), for the device appeals to

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4. This effect is already obtained by the simple repetition of the family name with which one greets a man upon meeting him. It is common to hear the Blacks greet each other by repeating their dyamu to each other several times.

its possessor's soul, ni. If, at this moment, the person flattered is in a normal state, his device causes his "soul to swell and his body to harden, inciting him to courageous action and joy." If the contrary is true, anger or emotion takes the place of contentment and calmness.

The reciter receives in return the strength of the beneficial word which, having contented the person it was addressed to, contents him also. There is an exchange of nyama: that which the reciter sends out and that which he receives in return and from which he benefits.

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That is why the recitation of the device is not always left to the individual's discretion. Because of its importance, it has become a public function generally reserved for the griot (dyeliw) who form a caste practicing endogamy and who earn their living by getting paid to recite the devices and adulations in daily life as well as during public or religious ceremonies (1). But the fact that they earn a

1. The recitation given by anyone other than the griot would be far from producing the same effect.

salary for this service affects their dignity: nobody else ever recites the devices because nobody wishes to be taken for a griot, and nobody ever marries him. The griot is at once indispensable, feared, and despised. The mechanism of forces put into motion by his action makes it possible to understand the ambivalence of feelings of which he is the object.

/78/ When the words come out of his mouth, the griot's tere is transformed into nyama, which becomes filled with a force called kuma nyamu, "nyama of words." This force goes from the head to the mouth of the speaker and reaches the person addressed. If a man is wealthy and powerful, it is said that he gets the "nyama from the mouth of those griot who flatter him." He is then forced to pay them for their encouragement. If he does not, they remain silent when

551 passing before his door and thus empty him of his nyama. The man
576 grows thin and poor. The griot may bring about his death with evil
778 words, their nyama attacking the heart, the chest, then the entire
564 body of the victim.

The griot's power over the person he flatters becomes more involved and varies according to what he is reciting. If he recites the burudyu several times, if he speaks at length of the ancestors, their nyama enters his mouth and is added to his own, thus reinforcing the power of the word. Thus, when the griot recites a barama without receiving payment, his nyama attacks the person spoken to. If this offense is repeated and if the burudyu is recited, the man is forced to pay if he does not wish to be attacked by the much more formidable nyama of the ancestors.

In these various situations, the tere of the person flattered intervenes: if it is good, it fights to defend the person, but if it is weak or wicked, it joins the ancestral forces and the person is doubly threatened.

The recitation is always made by the griot before a witness so that his action will be more binding and make the miser lose face. On the other hand, a man who pays the griot generously is looked after by the latter who sings of his generosity on all occasions and announces the sum he has received; often he does not hesitate to exaggerate the total amount received if he can hope to profit by doing so (1).

[789] 1. If the griot knows that the wealthy man he is addressing is miserly, he rubs his teeth with roots which he knows has the power to make his words even more effective.

[554] Sometimes a man reaches a secret agreement with the griot in order to gain prestige. He publicly gives him a considerable sum, part of which the griot returns the following day as agreed upon. The gift is so generous that none can surpass it.

[585 561] This practice is particularly apparent at the time of marriage. The men of the same age grade as the groom outdo each other in their gifts to the griot. The one who has given most passes for the most generous. Sometimes the griot invents a new barama on the spot even though he does not know the device.

551 The device is recited on numerous occasions. After a birth, the
576 griot proclaim it in the course of the name-giving ceremony, address-
778 ing themselves to the father, then to the newborn child /79/ who thus
564 receives it for the first time. At a marriage the barama of the two partners are alternatly recited. In everyday life, the recitation is carried on most frequently during religious ceremonies or feasts. In the hunt or at war, it has the effect of helping the participants and increasing their courage (1). In a meeting it is used to greet people

[727] 1. If the griot recites it to a war chief and the town under attack is taken, he receives part of the loot.

bearing the same name, and if one of the assistants is to be particularly honored, the first words of his device are recited.

551 In case of illness, the ally (senãnku) (2) comes to the patient's
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2. See p. 119.

side and recites his barama to encourage him and help him get well. If he is dying, the recitation, which is then the equivalent of a prayer, may help his soul return. After death, the ally, the griot, and the [764] blacksmiths come near the corpse to recite his barama in order to honor him.

55/ The devices pertaining to the various crafts are used when address-
576 ing the artisan with whom one has business. Thus the blacksmith to
539 whom one brings work is greeted first by his name to which is then added:

"ini fara ani goni, you are with stone and fire."

A person crossing a field will say to the farmer bent over the earth: "i ni tye i ba ka kusebe daba, greeting to him who handles the hoe well," or simply: "i ni tye daba la, greeting to him who is with the hoe." To the shoemaker one would say: "bana ani ba golo, (you are) with the acacia (3) and the goat leather."

[386] 3. This refers to the bana or boina (Acacia arabica) used by the shoemaker to make a black dye.

551 The institution of the device, with all its elaborations, has the
576 effect of confirming people in their bodies, their spiritual principles, and their social functions. Except for the cases of emigration mentioned above, the occasions are rare indeed when an individual is obliged to change his name or device during his life. A woman keeps her father's barama even after marriage.

551 An illegitimate child receives neither the name nor the device of
848 his family. They may be given him later if the father makes himself
564 known. A Bambara who contracts a misalliance, for example, by
783 marrying the daughter of a blacksmith or a griot, will bring into the world impure children who will never have a right to their father's barama (1).

1. Such a child is said to be a sofali (literally, horse donkey), that is, a bastard.

552 We must add that the prerogative of having a device is not limited
782 to humans. All animate beings, many /80/ inanimate ones, the elements of nature, places, villages, plants, animals, and all the supernatural powers have theirs which men address during prayers.

The Taboo

784 One or several eating taboos, tne or tana, are attached to the
[551] family name and are observed by all who bear the name. According to certain initiates, the taboos were decreed by Faro when he determined the food proper to each species (2) after having classified the

2. See p. 52.

beings of creation. For the common man, the origin of the taboo is always the subject of a tale or legend and justifies the bonds between an ancestor of the family and the animal or plant designated. Most frequently, the animal has helped the man, has saved his life, or the other way around; or else, following some serious events, the ancestor was transformed into an animal or plant. Numerous versions of the origins of such bonds are given.

T84 It has not been possible heretofore to consider all aspects of the various taboos. On the other hand, the great number of versions concerning their origin indicates that the current story, told to all who pass by, conceals much deep notions of the categories that indicate the bonds linking men to animals and plants (1). It would also be

1. See also L. Tauxier. La Religion bambara (Théorie des Ntana et des tabous /Theory of the Ntana and Taboos/), pp. 114-138.

appropriate to study the relations between the species, between animals and plants and minerals in terms of the spiritual forces that animate them.

Whatever it may be, the taboo confers on man his title of nobility; not to possess one is degrading. It assures the protection of the group that observes it. Thus, the hyenas of Konodimini protect the village inhabitants who feed them.

Examples of taboo:

T84 T73 The Traoré family has crocodile flesh as its taboo. An ancestor called Makyon, having transformed himself into a crocodile, fed his family during a famine that lasted six years; he fished and brought the catch to the members of his family.

In the seventh year, since the famine still raged, the Traoré decided to kill him for food. In the morning, when he appeared with the fish he had caught, an old man advanced to attack him. /81/ The animal stopped him and predicted he would die if he pursued his plan. The man paid no attention and wounded the beast which had enough strength left, however, to return to the river. The old man regretted his act and the others tried to disassociate themselves from the responsibility. The following morning the crocodile came out of the river and died at their feet so that they might see what they had done. The guilty man was in turn killed by his family and the two corpses were buried together in the same shroud. When all was over, the chief revealed that Maydon /sic/ was a member of the family, that as a member of the same race he had been feeding his kin

784 during the famine, and that in the future the crocodile would be taboo
773 to the Traoré as a sign of gratitude for his gift and as an apology for the murder committed.

The taboo of the Diara family is the lion, whose name they bear. In the olden days two old friends were always in the habit of hunting together with arrows and spears. In the course of a long famine, their weapons broke and they were not able to find others. In order to feed their families, they attacked wild animals with bare hands; the one would stun his victims with his fists, and the other would skin them.

Gradually the life they were leading changed their behavior. They no longer washed, their hair and beards grew, and thick hair covered their body. Their nails became so long and so hard that they used them to slice meat and to dig the earth. They even forgot the language they had spoken and only communicated by grunts.

They fought with the spirits to gain a foothold in those places ordinarily reserved for the latter. They no longer returned to their village. Their parents searched for them, but as soon as they saw people, they ran away. They ended by walking on all fours and appeared like the animals they pursued.

One day as they lay sleeping next to each other, they mated and the stronger one impregnated the weaker to give birth, a little later, to two lion cubs. The men who saw them in the bush with their offspring decided that hereafter they could not kill a lion for it had their blood in its veins. Even today, when a Diara meets a lion, the animal lies down, "so ashamed to be descended from the mating of two men who had become beasts."

784 These two examples, selected from many others, illustrate the relations between man and animal. These appear even more clearly in the mechanism set off by the breaking of the adopted taboo.

Indeed, the first consequence of any infraction is the offender's loss of the seeds in his collarbone, a symbol of his basic sustenance. He becomes "an empty granary" and, deprived of his strength, is unable to contend against that of the wounded animal /82/ attacking him. The pain he feels at that moment is proof of the state of his physical and psychic inferiority. Any breaking of a taboo affects first the eyes, then the other openings of the body.

784 If the animal is wounded, it delegates its tere to warn the guilty
783 man of the sin committed, but makes no attempt on his life since it is his ally. On the other hand, its death liberates its nyama which

784 acts more energetically. But it is even more serious to eat one's taboo
783 than to ill it, for then the person cannot get rid of his victim's nyama and must suffer all the consequences.

The guilty person goes to the shore of the Niger and in a loud voice, discloses the facts to Faro while making him an offering (millet mash, copper, etc.), then he drinks a little water and goes home. If he lives too far from the river, he goes to a remote place and acts in the same way by spilling a little of his own blood as a sign of expiation. These acts have the effect of rectifying everything with Faro whom he has offended by breaking the established order. Next, he undergoes the purification rites. Their agent is his ally semanku and the rites are carried out at an intersection, dangu (1). The effect of such rites is

[602] 1. See p. 183. In certain cases the purification may be carried out by a kinsman of an ascending generation and may include ablutions with water consecrated by a prayer addressed to Faro.

to rid him of his victim's nyama, and then to reinstate the symbol of the eight life-giving cereal seeds in his collarbone: thus he recovers his lost strength. After his recovery, the old men of his family summon him and give him some stern advice for another breaking of the taboo cannot be atoned by any purification: the animal's nyama will no no longer leave the repeating offender who may die of it.

784 Voluntary infractions, which are very rare, of course bring about far more serious consequences for the person in question since his responsibility is involved. This is not so in the opposite case. If a man has eaten his taboo without knowing it during a meal taken at the home of another, the animal's nyama may attack those responsible: either the host or his wife becomes ill. The guilty woman must then
[201] ask the man's forgiveness. On her knee and with her hands at the back, she discloses the facts to the person she has injured who may ask for time to think and make her wait in order to punish her. Otherwise he demands three kola nuts with which he carried out the dyanzani or "replacement." He throws them in the bush or gives them to the first poor person he meets. A few days later the responsible person is liberated.

/83/ Joking Relationship

602 608 A very important institution is also linked to the family name. It concerns the ties called "joking relationship," dyo benatye (literally, agreement between us), which is integrated with the general kinship relationships designated in the Mandingo country by the term senãnkuya. But family relationships in the strict sense, called sindyi benatye (literally, breast milk between us), are to be distinguished from dyo benatye which, on the contrary, involves the members of two families, or even of two different peoples.

Thus, a Koulibali is a Kéita's senãnku among the Bambara; Bozo and Dogon as well as Bozo and Somono are also senãnku (1). To the

1. Joking relationship called senãnkuya among the Bambara is termed mãgu among the Dogon, dagana among the Bozo, etc. This important institution, which embraces all the tribes of the French Sudan, has already been the object of a number of studies. See especially M. Delafosse, Haut-Sénégal Niger /The Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. 3, p. 206; H. Labouret, "La Parenté à plaisanteries en Afrique occidentale /Joking Relationship in West Africa/"; D. Paulme, Parenté à plaisanteries et alliance par le sang en Afrique occidentale /Joking Relationship and Blood Alliance in West Africa/; R. Radcliffe-Brown, On Joking Relationships.

In the "Alliance cathartique /The Cathartic Alliance/," M. Griaule throws light on the Dogon-Bozo relations which are at the origin of the institution in the Sudan. This brings out the fundamental notion of the duality of beings and the principles that animate them. A Dogon and a Bozo are twins, each carrying a particle of the other in his body and soul. When he insults or purifies, he appeals to that part of himself in the other and the powers he communicates in this way come to the help of his partner.

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The latest investigations on this subject have brought to light the following facts: Dogon and Bozo have, respectively, eight seeds and eight fish in their collarbones and thus they realize the distribution of the heavenly sustenance (see p. 53). This latter is evidence of their spiritual integrity and any breaking of taboos results first in depriving the person of his seeds or his fish. The purpose of the institution is to enable the ally to intervene in order to reinstate the nourishing substance in the body of the guilty person.

It should be stated here that in instances in which they are described by the same term (senãnkuya), kin relationships, which also involve joking exchanges, must not be confused with relationships between families (more exactly between names) or between tribes.

Moreover, within this last group, several types of alliances can be observed: some involve exogamy (Dogon and Bozo; Bozo and Peul, etc...); others exclude the possibility of carrying out purification rites. It will therefore be necessary to examine as many cases as possible before establishing any rules for this type of alliance.

Mandé, a Koulibali and a Tangara, bound by a long and durable friendship, decided to seal it in a lasting way. They opened their veins and put a little blood from one wound into the other, thus realizing the alliance through this exchange. They next prepared a meal which they ate /84/ together while pronouncing their oaths never to spill each other's blood.

In this way the dyo benatye (1) was consecrated between them and

1. Because of this alliance, members of the Kouloubali family were authorized by the Tangara of the village of Barbé (region of Mopti) to settle in the village. The

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Tangara chief gave them land to build their houses and set up their fields. The two groups live in perfect understanding.

their descendants. Such an alliance is equivalent to kinship. It involves the absolute obligation never to covet the life or possessions of the senãnku. The two parties are obligated to mutual assistance in many cases: food, housing, material aid; help in case of war or lawsuit; obligatory presence at religious ceremonies; purifications in case a taboo is broken.

These rules imply that the alliance affects the individual not only in his social roles, but also in his spiritual principles. The senãnku is a kind of twin to each individual belonging to the other family. He has within himself a part of his partner and vice versa.

602 Because of this fact, the reactions set off by insult or by joking are singular: the senãnku will accept from the mouth of the other, without becoming angry, mockery which he would not normally tolerate. He cannot be affected by them since the words are addressed to that part of his being which comes from the person insulting him. Moreover, the joke or the insult, without touching his spiritual integrity, has the effect of confirming him in his position relative to the person addressing him and of affirming the state of both parties, thereby increasing their vitality. It determines movements of forces from which the two speakers reciprocally benefit, as from a kind word.

This proceeding is used on numerous occasions, particularly at the time a person achieves a new social status or a new grade. The senãnku jokes with a newborn child as soon as his name is given and, later, on the day he wears his first piece of clothing. The circumcised boys become allies and joke between themselves the day of the daworo which consecrates the age grade (1). On the evening of

1. See p. 241.

marriage, the young woman is the object of ritual sarcasm which marks her final introduction into the husband's family group.

602 783 The senãnku is the only one who, in certain cases, is able to carry out the purification rites made necessary by a broken taboo (tne). It is true that he carries in his collarbone—but only /85/ where his partner is concerned—twice the number of symbolic seeds,

602 that is, sixteen. This fact qualifies him, by his gesture of purification
783 and through his essential role as provider of sustenance, to restore the seeds that had left the guilty man's collarbone. If the offense is slight, the offender gives him millet, money, or an object. The wounded animal's nyama settles on the object, and the senãnku who receives it rids him of it without being affected himself. If the offense is more serious, the two allies go off together to a road intersection, dangu; then the senãnku takes a straw torch in the shape of a cross and circles the guilty man's head with it from left to right. The being who has been offended by the broken taboo can refuse nothing when confronted with this procedure. He removes the nyama he had inflicted and the man, powerfully aided by the forces of the purifying agent, recovers those he had lost, as symbolized by the seeds in his collarbone.

This cathartic role of reinstating subsistence forces into the human body is illustrated in daily life by the food prestations to which the partners are held. This is like the secular and materialistic representation of an invisible operation of purification.

The Person: Exceptional Cases

000 Certain physical peculiarities constitute the manifest evidence of a modification of the elements making up the person. It is appropriate here to examine the cases of individuals who are thus affected.

Twins

845 Twins, flani (literally, two little ones), are two new beings given to men by Faro and considered as his offspring alone. Because of this fact, twins inherit neither the ni nor the dya of a dead person, but they inherit new principles which come to them from the spirit. Moreover, their dya never leaves the water for the shadow, but remains in the hands of the spirit throughout their entire life. Because of this they are protected from all danger and from all impurity.

Such a birth is considered a blessing and is granted only to certain
[201] privileged people called kunandi. It is announced by holding up the right and left forefingers without uttering a word, for its announcement would be so powerful that it would harm the newborn. Their mother wraps a white cotton band called dyala about her forehead to indicate the presence of the children's dya /86/ in Faro's hands.

845 Everyone visits the parents' home and takes to them what gifts one can
[431] give for to give to twins is equivalent to giving to Faro.

The name-giving ceremony is carried out on the river bank if the
845 village is situated close to the Niger, or otherwise on the edge of a
553 pond. The children are brought by their parents who, between them,
851 represent the number seven. They are bathed, their hair shaved off and thrown into the river, while the father says: "Mother Faro, your sons are born, here is their hair." (1) He then gives the cotton band,

1. Ba faro i wolo dew kunsi ye nin ye.

dyala, which was worn by the mother to the officiant who encircles the child's forehead with it while saying: "These two people are older than I am; let the nyama of the name which is to be given them leave with the dyala." (2) Then he gives them a special name. (3)

2. Nin ma fla ka koro u ma, u čua dali nyama ka ta fini disa fĕw dyala fe.

3. Séni and Siné for boys; Bintou and Wasa
[177] for girls. Among the Islamized Bambara this custom is also respected; the names given are always Alassan and Fouséni. This is most likely a distortion of the Arab names given to twins in Morocco.

845 The next day, carrying one of the children and accompanied
851 by a woman in charge of the other, the mother goes begging for millet or cotton in the village. She holds two identical spoon gourds in her hands. The gifts, equal in weight and quality, symbolize the twins; they are placed on the spoons. Then crossing her hands, the woman pours them into the basket in which she carries the gifts (4).

4. All the symbolism of gifts made to twins, like that of the double pot (see below), confirms observations made in the Sudan on the relationships between gifts and trade. On this subject, see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, pp. 234 ff. It is interesting to note here that

845 851 each twin is the dya of the other and that this term means "shadow of the body," "spiritual double," as well as "balance." To trade is dyago.

845 301 [531] Three or four days after the name-giving ceremony, depending on their sex, the twins are given bracelets of white metal representing their dya. Geometrical symbols of the universe, the sky and the earth, are engraved on each of these (1). The opening of the bracelet repre-

1. This figure is formed by a rectangle divided into two equal superposed squares, including a multiplication sign in the lower square to represent the earth, and an open v in the upper square to represent the sky.

sents that of the incomplete terrestrial world. When the twins die [766] they will be buried with the bracelets closed over their arms or their ankles to signify that they have penetrated a complete and closed world. Formerly the sacrifices to Faro were carried out with ornaments 845 borrowed from a twin. The person making the sacrifice presented 301 them to the /87/ river while saying: "The iron of the twins is witness 782 to the sacrifice offered to Faro." (2) After the ceremony, everyone

2. Flani neke ye ma ɣere ye faro sõni la.

gave white kola nuts to the twin; the interested party then went to the village square and waved in the air his arms bedecked with ornaments to spread to the four cardinal points Faro's beneficial nyama acquired in the course of the sacrifice. In certain areas twins wear a pendant in the shape of double slave fetters, called dyõ neke, "irons of the captive," or an amulet called sinzin, "support," composed of a little piece of wood carved in the shape of a double cup and preferably made by a Bozo. A man who has had twins three times [778] must acquire a double pot which is always kept full of water and which becomes the object of an annual sacrifice (3).

3. See p. 124, n. 1.

845 Up to the time they are twelve, the children bathe themselves preferably in the Niger. They supposedly can walk on water and never run the risk of drowning.

The twins do not become separated from each other any more than the dya is separated from the living being to which it is attached. They wear the same clothes and eat the same food simultaneously. Formerly male twins married the same woman. If one of them dies 845 at an early age, the blacksmith carves a small wooden doll called 778 flanitokele, which takes the name of the deceased and which the mother puts on the mat next to the living child. The latter takes this doll with him at the time of his circumcision and keeps it during the period of his seclusion in order to bring it back to the parental home whence it is never removed. When he marries, he sticks the doll into the earth along with another piece of wood symbolizing the wife of the deceased. Since twins are in a sense a living replica of Faro, none can bother them without showing disrespect to him. On the other hand, they are the object of attention and precaution on the part of their family as well as their neighbors. Their presence is always beneficial. Considered invulnerable, twins used to march ahead of [728] troops in times of war and would serve as inviolable intermediaries between the warring parties during truce.

The Hermaphrodite

826 The hermaphrodite, being both male and female, is to all extent and purpose his own twin. Consequently, he has no dya (1).

[825 304] 1. The hyena is considered a hermaphrodite; it can engender or conceive, depending on its size and strength; "the stronger impregnating the weaker." A tattooing system is based upon this belief.

/88/ The Albino

[143] Albinos of light or reddish skin and red hair are called gombele or yepege, this latter term being reserved for those who show the most accentuated characteristics.

826 The albino is supposedly born of sexual relations which took place 833 in the middle of the day when the sun is in the koblenkaba, sky of

826 [333] Faro's wrath—a fact which constitutes a serious breaking of taboo. The consequence of this is to coalesce in the maternal womb the twins originally granted to the woman by Faro and to decolorize the skin of the being thus formed. Because of this fact, the albino, the embodiment of twins, does not inherit the spiritual princples of a deceased person and is also a new being given to men by Faro. But the impurity he has acquired increases tenfold his tere and his wanzo, [304] which are so active that the circumciser must sacrifice on his own personal altars before performing the operation. From the ambivalence of the albino, originally of the same essence as Faro but fallen because of the impurity transmitted by his parents, stem various customs and representations. (1).

1. This ambivalence is also at the root of the belief that the albino is a being formerly provided with wings and able to fly (see p. 68, a quality he lost after his contact with the impure soil.

826 718 His body is believed to be endowed with special powers. The person who owns his skull will have a numerous family and prosperity; his hair brings wealth; the marrow of his bones provides gold and copper. If he is made to sit at a place where bones are buried, whatever one asks for is granted. His excrements, mixed with seed, have the effect of increasing the harvest for the year.

826 782 Because of the value attributed to the albino he is a choice victim for the sacrifices to Faro. His nyama is such that he can be sacrificed without prayer, the act itself constituting an efficacious invocation. Lacking living albinos, men often tried to appropriate the remains of a buried body.

/89/ Chapter 4

SACRIFICE AND THE ALTAR

782 To call upon spiritual forces and to influence them, the Bambara use prayer, offering, and sacrifice. They perform oral and manual

782 rites in all places at all times. They pray to the sky, to the cardinal points, and to the spirits; they sacrifice on rocks, on the earth, on trees, in water holes, as well as on altars sheltered in the sanctuaries, or located in private or public places. Every circumcised adult, father of a family, or owner of a house and arable land can be a sacrificer whose qualification is underscored by the red stain which sometimes adorns the walls of the main room of his house (1).

1. See pp. 171ff.

To the uninformed observer these rituals cover a great network of apparently unrelated beliefs. But actually it is otherwise. The rituals stimulate definite movements of forces which are integrated with those of the world.

Without trying to give a general picture of the manners, the times, and the places peculiar to Bambara rites, it is nevertheless important to study apart one of the most important mechanisms, namely the blood sacrifice. It constitutes the framework for the rituals and brings into play the principles and elements composing the living being (see preceding chapter), for it must be noted that the first sacrifices stated in the myth were human sacrifices.

A sacrifice takes place when the blood of the victim runs over a substance or an object containing the force of a supernatural power or of an ancestor. The words of the prayer pronounced during the immolation dedicate the victim to the power that comes to nourish itself on the blood according to popular belief. At the same time, they direct the life forces which escape from the body. The soul, ni, is channeled by the altar and will be kept there until resurrection. Its nyama, which gains in power as /90/ the agony is prolonged, is also retained by the altar whose strength it increases. The victim is thus completely emptied of its spiritual principles for "all the nyama are in the blood" (2) which it abandons.

2. Nyama be bi dyoli la.

782 826 In all cases, the sacrifice represents an exchange: the sacrificer receives in return a part of the strength of the one whom he supplants (3). The blood is the carrier of an active, dangerous element left on

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3. The mechanism of blood sacrifice among the Bambara is comparable to that observed among the Dogon and described by M. Griaule, "Remarques sur le mécanisme du sacrifice dogon (Soudan Français) /Remarks on the Mechanism of Dogon Sacrifice (French Sudan)/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes. Vol. 10, 1940, pp. 127 ff.

the altar. At the time men gave the balanza their blood, they would let it dry and then, licking the trunk with their tongue, would reclaim it after it was rid of the element constituting the offering. All their active forces passed into the tree and a substance almost totally lacking in vitality was returned to them.

782 The blood sacrifices which were originally instituted on the trunk of the balanza are actually performed in the most varied sites: earth, trees, ponds, wells, etc. Moreover, as the Bambara developed their technology, they would sacrifice on those objects, utensils, or contrivances which they discovered or invented such as the forge and its tools, the loom, and agricultural implements.

782 The Bambara also have altars which may be classified into three
778 categories:

1. The wood stumps called pembele, which represent Pemba. Many heads of families or of religious societies keep one of these (1).

1. See p. 77 for a description of the pembele altars.

A unique sanctuary at Massala is a pilgrimage center for Bambara from all regions who come in great numbers to take part in the annual sacrifice. Besides pembele, it contains two large pots, da, covered with sacrificial blood, which give the sanctuary its name. It is in this place that ordeals are executed, judicial questions settled, and serious illnesses treated.

2. The altars, made of stones crudely cut and occasionally engraved, have their origin in a mythical stone, issued out of the seventh part of the earth, and situated under the mound where Faro's female twins were born. Having a red color, it was itself a symbol of sacrifice. It divided itself and gave birth to all other sacrificial stones (Fig. 5 and Pl. V. b).

782 /91/ Actually the altars from the region of Ségou originate mostly
778 in Toko, a settlement situated to the south of the town where the king's
326 blacksmiths lived. The ancestor of these blacksmiths is buried in the rocks which border Toko and from which the stones used as altar are

Fig. 5.—Stone altar, fara ba, of Banankoroni, consecrated to ancestors. It is stuck into the ground above the skull and bones of an albino, hoes, and a circumcision knife. The ritual drawing traced during the ceremonies of the renewal of the year represents the torches and the whips of the Kworé, 3 men and 4 women, which recall the number 7, image of the creation (Informant's drawing).

carved. If a village chief wants to obtain one he sends a delegate to Toko. This emissary receives from the blacksmith the stone appropriate to the function of the altar and the quality of the person

782 778 [326] requesting it. Thus, a black stone is given to those who have broken a /92/ taboo, a stone of two colors to a stranger, and the red stone "rounded and polished by the ancestors" to those whom one wishes to honor.

The stone altars which are innumerable (both private and public ones) generally represent the ancestors. When they are placed in the fields they receive the sacrifices offered in their name for helping the crops. At the intersection of narrow roads and on the public square, they assure the stability of ancestral customs.

3. The Bambara also sacrifice on manufactured objects which bear the general name of boli (literally, to run) and which are the equivalent of the altars although they are of an entirely different nature than the preceding ones. Their origin is different. To the initiates they originate in the twelfth bangini which gave birth to the day (see pp. 30-31). In the shape of "globules" they were released in space by Faro as he descended to the earth; they were collected by the spirits of the air and of the ground into which some of them penetrated, and were later given to men (1).

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1. The popular belief has it that the eight principal boli of the Bambara were brought back from Mecca by the famous Makanta Djigui, a personage whose name is cited in numerous prayers (particularly in the course of the ceremonies of the Komo).
L. Tauxier attributes this tradition to Islam influence under the reign of Soundiata's successor, Malinké Kankan Moussa, who made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 (La Religion bambara, p. 287, n. 3).

The name of Makanta Djigui is cited in the device (burudyu) of the Komo: the chiefs of this important society carry their altars each year to the shore of the Niger near the village of Tikko on the spot where the historical canoe which transported him is said to have sunk.

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It is possible that this figure played the role of a religious legislator by codifying certain beliefs and founding associations around the boli which, according to qualified informants, existed before his intervention. On this point see also L. Tauxier, La Religion bambara, p. 287, n. 3.

The versions of the voyage of Makanta Djigui, which the natives readily tell, are innumerable. See the Abbé Henry, L'Âme d'un peuple africain: les Bambara /The Soul of an African People: The Bambara/, pp. 131-133: Ch. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta /The Bambara of Ségou and of Kaarta/, p. 170; D. Traore, Makanta Djigui, fondateur de la magie soudanaise /Makanta Djigui, Founder of Sudanese Magic/, pp. 23-25.

We have collected two versions of this episode, which we do not feel useful for presentation in this study.

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The boli, also called nyana, are made with the most diverse materials: hyena tails, peppers, honey, coal, precious metals, parts of the body. Each element has its value, and its use is determined by its place in the categories: the time of its manufacture is also important. But whatever its composition, each boli, whose name expresses the universal movement of things, is a combination of elements representing the parts of the universe (1). /93/ It is,

1. At the present stage of this investigation the classification by categories of materials or elements composing the Bambara universe has only been outlined. It is only after the completion of this study that the exact role given the elements composing the boli will become clear and that the problem of the origin of these altars can be considered.

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782 therefore, the symbol of the universe and the receptacle of the forces which animate it. These forces, already very powerful at the time the boli is made, are constantly kept up, increased by the additions received in the course of the blood sacrifices of which the boli is the object. It becomes a concentration of forces, which gives back in proportion to that which it receives and of which the owner is the first beneficiary.

A boli is also an intermediate agent, permitting one to reach a supernatural power—an ancestor or a living being who impregnates it with strength by coming to consume the offering over it. Through the spilled blood, this strength reenters the victim as well as the sacrificer if he partakes of it.

Therefore a boli contains:

A part of the soul (ni) and the force (nyama) of the being to whom it is consecrated.

The ni and the nyama of the victims offered to it.

The nyama of individuals who, having broken the taboos dictated by the divinity, have died as a result.

The Bambara differentiate two kinds of boli: the most numerous, whose power is relatively benign, called soni (literally, to give little); and those which contrariwise are charged with powerful, truly dangerous forces, called saraka (1). The latter, by their power

1. The čuafebla is a soni; the mbe ndyugu ka is a saraka (see pp. 175 and 176).

alone, supposedly kill the victims offered them without making it necessary to cut the victim's throat. It suffices to present to them the victims while reciting an appropriate prayer to make the victims die. It is then said that the "boli has made the blood come out" and this death is equivalent to a blood sacrifice (2). These boli also

2. If the victim does not die fast enough, the person offering sacrifice may "insult" the altar to force it to act.

attack those whom a person has vowed to persecute.

It is said that a boli "is hot and has a dry throat" and that is why occasionally the ritual includes collecting the blood in a gourd in which [the boli] is allowed to soak.

778 Some boli are individual, sometimes inherited from an ancestor
782 and consecrated to their owner whose strength they maintain. Others are collective and consecrated to supernatural powers which protect the life of the community.

778 The taboos relating to beings whose soul "impregnates" the boli
782 and to the elements which compose them are decreed at the time /94/
784 of their making. They must be scrupulously respected by those responsible and by those officiating. The boli are generally placed in a sheltered spot either in sanctuaries or in an isolated room of the house, which no one enters without the permission of those responsible. This is done in order to avoid the dangers resulting from broken taboos which would affect the integrity of the boli as well as that of its owners. The handling of the boli, dangerous as it is, is restricted to priests, to the head of the family, or to the owner.

782 Victims most commonly offered on all altars are domestic animals such as fowl, cattle, sheep, and goats. However, on the altars of hunters and those of the uncircumcised, only wild animals are immolated.

The color of the victim is determined by the quality of the being to which it is consecrated as well as by the altar itself. Animals of
[822] a red color are generally killed on the boli of religious societies, thereby increasing the nyama which they contain. White, the symbol of light and purity, is reserved for Faro.

782 The death of the victim is used as an occasion for divination.
787 The throat is cut in such a way as to prolong the death struggle so that the officiating person may interpret the position of the body. The cutting process is followed by eating which has the function of communion. Furthermore, certain parts of the body (the liver) are left on the altar; others such as the jawbone, feathers, and hair are kept as tokens by the person offering the sacrifice.

782 The ritual is usually accompanied by offerings of boiled millet as "refreshment," since the blood is given to the altar as a nourishment. Kola nuts, chosen for their shape and color, are divided into two portions: the officiating person chews one half and spits it out onto the altar before eating the other half.

In former times, human sacrifice was also practiced. These took place in serious cases involving the kingdom, the king, or the chiefs. The usual victim was the albino.

782 As an example we will summarize below the ritual killing of albinos as it was practiced under the royalty. This underlines the mystical value of the victim and is an excellent example of the mechanism inherent in sacrifice; it brings out the ritual value of the details on each of which the Bambara place particular emphasis. Finally, it confirms the value and symbolism of different parts of the body as described in the preceding chapter.

782 /95/ The kings of Ségou were formerly provided with albinos by a
826 man from the village of Pelengena who kept them prisoners and set them aside for this purpose. But this man exploited them by shaving their hair and selling it to the chiefs of neighboring villages as symbols of the men whom, sooner or later, they could reckon to have under their domination. The chief, having counted his subjects, war prisoners held as slaves as well as captives received as tribute, would prepare as many small sticks as there were men; then he would mix up these sticks with the hair and bury them all in the wall over the sill of the entrance to his home. The hair is supposed to represent beforehand an increase in the subjects of his domain and to help bring in the taxes.

But the albinos themselves were kept for the king who sacrificed them to Faro in cases involving the affairs of the kingdom.

1. When the king found himself in difficulties of an administrative nature, the victim was cut in half through the middle of the body at
[283 824] the level of the abdomen by means of a rope of the da fiber (1): his

1. Hibiscus. The nyama fiber was considered impure and could not be used for the albino.

cries, gestures, and excrement were considered the vehicles of a nyama which "would eliminate the difficulty encountered by the king." No one was supposed to hear his cries which were not intended for human ears but for Faro, to whom suffering was also due. The king, above all, should not hear the screams under penalty of failing in his enterprise, and yet he had to be present at the torture and watch it with complete detachment.

The lower half of the victim's body was Faro's due. It was carried to the Niger by three men if the victim was a male, or by four if it was a female. One of them carried the body on his head.

782 826 While keeping his eyes and his left hand closed, he walked without touching the ground with his toes in order to respect "the soul of that which he carried (1). At the edge of the river, the joints were broken,

1. To touch the ground with one's toes amounted to putting the soul of the victim's body in contact with the earth's impurity (see p. 102).

the marrow extracted and poured into the water. After placing their toes on the body, to "give a part of their soul to Faro," the men deposited it gently in the river, into which it sank while they loudly proclaimed the reason for their action. When they returned to their master, they brought him the spirit's gratitude and a little water from the river, which was poured over the royal seat (2).

2. This offering was called nasi, "well-being."

/96/ The upper part of the victim's body was the king's and used for the needs of the state. The tõdyõ first blew into the mouth of the tortured victim so that the "air, in coming out, would take all his words to Faro." Then they buried his head under the king's throne and danced to the rhythm of drums.

[726 789] In case of war, the blood which had spilled during the sacrifice was collected by the tõdyõ and dried in the sun; then the residue was carried away and before the assault was thrown in the direction of the town to be attacked. The king who advanced with his army found, according to the formula, "his sacrifice before him" (saraka bla fe).

782 826 789 2. In case the king was short of funds, the killing took place towards the west and was performed by sticking a bamboo stick into the throat of the victim so that blood would run over the cowrie shells which the king had earned himself "with his own sweat." Thus consecrated, the cowries "attracted gold, silver, and copper to the royal treasury."

The head was placed under the throne. The chest and lungs were dried, reduced to powder, and preserved in a bag which the king kept. When he received his tax-payers, he smeared his face and mouth with this powder, thus forcing the visitor to give. He rubbed his body with it before going to war, causing the warriors to say:

782 826 789 "To see the king is to see gold" (1).

1. Fama yele ye sanu yele ye.

He gave some of it to his wives and children who put it in their drinks in order "to inherit his place and his goods." This powder was offered at each sacrifice to Faro in order to fertilize the kingdom.

782 826 266 3. When a family was plagued by numerous deaths, they asked the king to authorize the sacrifice of an albino whom he furnished himself. The victim's tongue was dried, pounded to powder, seasoned with pepper, and eaten by the father of the family to permit him to "reclaim the words and the nyama of the deceased." The nose was swallowed by the mother so that she might "reclaim the breath of the dead children." The father then ate the broiled eyes to "preserve lost sights." The dried ears were hung above the sill of the entrance "so that death, upon hearing the funeral wails, might not return." The skull was retained as a token and buried in the courtyard; a wooden stick marked the burial place. The rest of the body was thrown into the Niger, "for an ordinary man does not have the right to keep that which is reserved for the king."

782 826 622 If the king permitted it, chiefs of the important villages /97/ also placed the body of an albino under their seats "in order that their authority be solid and enduring" (2).

2. Sometimes the sum total of the taxes raised in a village were given the parents of an albino in exchange for the child. Those who could not obtain a victim used an animal bone as a substitute and performed the ritual as though it were an albino. Regarding the chief's seat, see p. 178.

782 826 In certain serious cases, the albino was sacrificed on the altar of Komo. This sacrifice was accomplished in silence for "a prayer unknown to the person sacrificing is in the blood of the albino" who is powerful enough to act without words.

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Chapter 5

TECHNOLOGY

T73 The Bambara who are conscious of the evolution of their civilization trace it far back in time. The history of their origin as well as the feats and exploits of their most distant ancestors are not only inscribed in their memories but also in present day ceremonies and often in the material products of the culture, secular as well as religious.

The invention and evolution of technology, in the course of which the spiritual and the material, revelation and human effort, all work together, give rise to legends and representations which are characteristic of Bambara psychology (1).

1. What we relate here concerning the origin of technology is exclusively a summary of what the natives tell. The context, in the form of practical daily rituals, of which the forge is the best example, is sufficient and requires no commentary.

According to Bambara thought, all technology is an atonement taught man by Faro, a palliative to cosmic disorder, generally induced by a broken taboo. Famine, war, epidemics, misery, and death, which such disorders bring about, are compensated for —as far as possible—by new technologies which are revealed as needs arise. All these exist potentially in the wooden club used to smash and beat the fiber, which was the first raw material used (2).

[171]

2. The wooden club is a duplicate of the mythical blacksmith's hammer which contained the techniques and the cultivable grains (see p. 53, n. 1). The same origin of technology is given by the Dogon, see Dieu d'Eau, p. 84.

T73 829 The first works were made by "primitive men," ancestors of the Bambara of whom the following description is given:

773 829 "They were covered with shaggy body hair, beard and hair; their long nails resembled claws; their teeth resembled fangs. They knew no language and had no clothing to protect themselves from bad weather; they lived in holes dug in the /99/ ground or in habitable natural caves, at the bottom of which they slept and kept their prey. To defend themselves against wild animals, they placed wooden spikes and pointed rocks at the entrance of these quarters. These deep holes communicated with each other and together formed regular underground villages" (Fig. 6) (1).

[332]

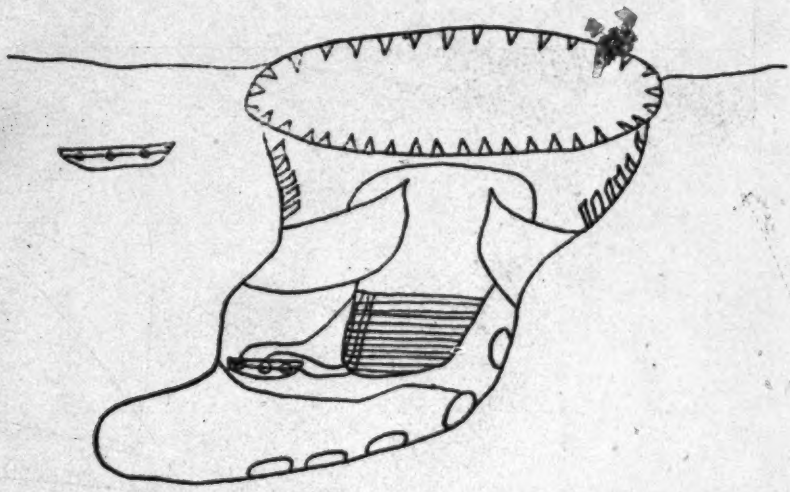

Fig. 6 —Underground home of primitive men. The entrance is guarded by pointed rocks. In the center, the drawing of the first loom invented by men. At the left, the shuttle (see p. 181). (Drawing by an informant.)

[172]

1. Some of these excavations in the neighborhood of Ségou, which may still be visited today, are venerated by the Bambara as ancestral homes.

Since they did not know language these men communicated by means of head gestures, movements of the feet and hands, and grunts. When a difference arose between them, before using their hands they drew back their lips and measured their long canines to determine who the winner would be. "Later they were given language, but

knowing its power, men at first used it sparingly. A question was never discussed twice. If a request was reiterated, after an objection, the party requested would bow and agree at the risk and peril of the person making the request."

Men first lived by gathering and later by fishing and hunting without tools, using only /100/ hands to seize their prey, and nails and teeth to tear and cut it. Gradually this primitive life changed; technologies developed one by one according to a chronology which the present Bambara still remember.

The first raw material used, according to a tradition which is not confined to the Bambara alone, was the fiber of the nyama tree (1)

1. Bauhinia reticulata (in the north), Bauhinia Thonningii (in the south).

(nyama fu) out of which were woven the first fishing nets, the first sling, and the first loincloth (2).

2. The Dogon also mention this fiber as the first material used by men. With them as with the Bambara, it has a ritual function. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 26.

When they began to work the soil, they developed a set of primitive wooden tools. At the same time, they invented a throwing weapon made of the same material. Wood remained in use for a long time; the invention of weaving and crude pottery goes back to this period. Later, they came to know stone tools, iron, and the forge. The art of house building, about which no myth has been gathered until now, seems to have developed much later, after the discovery of iron (3).

3. Certain parts of the investigation concerning technology have been summarized by the author in "l'Arme et l'outil chez les anciens Bambara /Weapons and Tools among the Ancient Bambara/," Africa, Vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 105-111.

The study of this assemblage of tools and of their ritual use is most suggestive because they are a first indication of technological

TT3 evolution. They also indicate different stages in the development of the forms. These may be observed in certain museums of arts and crafts which, in some villages, are the sanctuaries where ancestral material is kept. Finally, in numerous ceremonies and in the education of the young, they constitute precious milestones in the history of the Bambara people.

Fishing and Hunting

TT3 226 According to tradition, the fishing net was the first instrument of technology taught men, and fish constituted the primeval food.

"One day, four women went to the shore of the Niger to collect sand which they used for bedding and which also served as food since they no longer received any from the sky. As they advanced, the sand drew back so that they soon found themselves very far from their usual stopping place. They /101/ then wished to return, but Faro prevented them from doing so and asked them to work for him, promising them a precious gift in return. They "swept up the spirit's excrements" for seven days; on the eighth day, "the words began with Faro." He showed them two fishing nets, dyo, and explained to them their manufacture and use. One had very fine loops, dyonyemise (literally, net of the thin eyes), and the other larger loops, dyonyekumba (literally, net with big eyes). Both were made of the fiber of the nyama tree. The first was reserved for tneni (1) fishing, called

B25

1. Alestes nigrinileatus.

"Faro's excrements," and the second for the capture of larger fish such as sheatfish, gurnard, and catfish.

"For seven days the women were taught by the spirit and his captive; on the eighth day they were liberated. Seven days after these events they began to fish and to nourish themselves with fish.

"But they soon abused the gift they had received. Taking turns day and night, and fishing without interruption at the very place of the revelation, they taxed the spirit's patience. The latter appeared to them above the water, holding his girl twins in his arms; he complained of their harshness, their stupidity, and the weariness they caused him. Reclaiming the secret he had given them, he indicated to them that fishing would hereafter be a man's job and that they would only have the right to sell the fish.

773 226 "Despite their tears, the spirit gave the nets to three men who were present and repeated his teaching. The women left the water's edge while the men turned their new knowledge to account. But at the end of a few days the women became hungry; they went to ask for fish which for seven days was denied them. They then united with the fishermen and the Bozo people were the issue of these first marriages."

At first, fishing was reserved for the Bozo people alone and it was only later that the Bambara learned from the Bozo how to make and manage the fishing nets as well as how to carry out the numerous rites centered around them.

773 226 411 The Bambara practiced hunting and gathering before becoming farmers. It is interesting to compare the fishing net with the sling (ndõfere) now mostly used by children. One of its models (Fig. 7) is

[532]

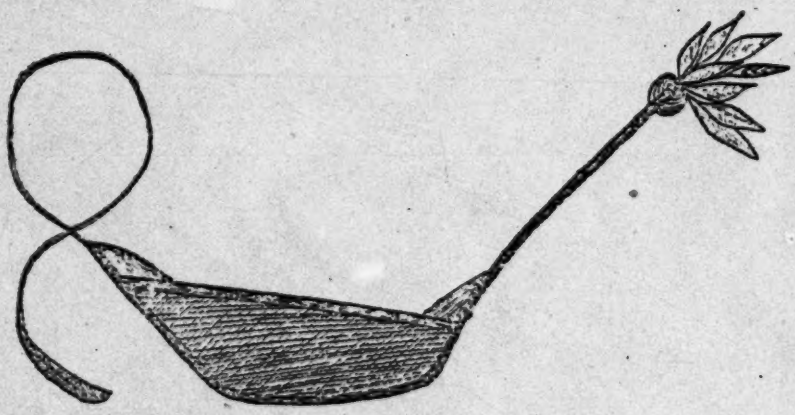

Fig. 7 — Sling (ndõfere) of the ancient Bambara (Drawing by an informant).

described as having been the most ancient of their weapons of the hunt and war. The central portion of this sling which in reality had the shape of a net /102/ (dyoba, literally, big net) woven from nyama fibers and similar to the one used by fishermen, was drawn out into two thongs. The right one (kinintegere, literally, tegere of the right) ended in a sort of a bouquet of wooden lamellae (tegere), making it easier to hold. The left one (missema, literally, little thing) or numan (literally, left) was free. The man would hold the weapon by both ends, putting stones in the net and "blowing on the right thong to give breath" to the sling. Placing his left foot forward, would twirl it rapidly and let go the left thong, thus releasing the projectiles.

773 224 411 Propitiatory sacrifices were offered on the wooden lamellae and the blood ran along the thong into the net. In addition, the hunter would saturate his weapon with the blood of wounded or killed animals to give his contrivance the victims' strength and to increase his own skill.

The ndõfere was used for a long time as a military weapon.

Weaving

773 286 The invention of weaving is linked to the discovery of cotton cultivation. The latter appeared long before that of millet at a time when the only known tools were those of wood used to scratch /103/ the earth at the base of the wild grasses with which men nourished themselves (1).

[171] 1. See p. 154. The Dogon admit the same priority of weaving over cultivation of cereal grains. See M. Griaule. Dieu d'eau, pp. 31ff.

The myth mentions simultaneously the appearance of cotton and the invention of spindles and shuttle; it does not mention the loom which appeared later. The tale of the manufacture of the first clothing also includes details on dyeing which seems to have been known at a very early date.

When the men returned from the bush where they had been cultivating the norolã̃ sise (commonly known as cram-cram) and the narakata, a kind of couch grass which provided them with edible seeds, they would often abandon their wooden hoes at the crossroads in honor of the Soba spirit.

One day an old man who used to pass nearby was summoned by the spirit, saying: "To all of you who leave your hoes as you pass by, I wish to give something to hide your nakedness; but I will do it if you offer me a sacrifice."

The old man reported this incident to the men of his generation, who decided to sacrifice an albino at the crossroads. The spirit then told them to take the seed which they would find at the intersection of the roads and taught them how to sow and harvest it.

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286

"This," he said, "will be useful to you later as clothing." Men first made skirts of leaves and fibers which they used as loincloth. Then they sent their women to sing and give thanks to the spirit. When they had sown and harvested, they placed the cotton on the crossroads as a gesture of homage (1). The spirit then taught the wife of a farmer,

1. This custom is still observed today.

who used to come and greet him everyday at noon. One day she saw at the crossroads a bird whose name means "little bird who spins the cotton of God" (ala ka kwori parata kono ni). It held white fibers in its beak, pulled them out with its feet, and rolled the thread thus obtained around the body with its wings. "Watch the bird," said the spirit. "In this way he spins and weaves in the sky in order to protect his eggs. Cotton should be used in this way. Your death is near. Begin work from tomorrow on this little stick," he added, pointing to a spindle, "and teach the women of your family and the children."

The woman first spun awkwardly and went down to the river to show Faro her work and to ask for help. A fish came out of the water and gave her a spindle whorl in the shape of a ball, showed her how to adapt it to the spindle, and explained to her its use and divine origin. It announced to her that hereafter similar spindle whorl would fall from the sky with the rain for the women who spun cotton.

/104/ Having resumed her work with this new tool the woman was successful in it and taught her companions. They then threw their first threads into the Niger as an offering to the spirit so that the secret might not be lost. All artisans did the same with their first piece of work (2).

[782]

2. Every first piece of work is thrown into the river as an offering to Faro. It is a guarantee for the artisan that his skill will be retained and that his technique will improve. Actually the young spinners of Ségou throw their first spindle into the river. In addition, the parata bird which taught weaving is captured, its wings and feet are roasted, and the powder is given to whoever begins the appreticeship so that it may be over rapidly.

773
286 Seventeen days after the apprenticeship the old woman died. Her companions continued to spin but since they did not work on wood (1), they had to ask the men to carve spindles, thus revealing

[412]

1. Except for cooking, a woman never uses a knife, an object reserved for men.

their secret.

Some time after this the spirit sent a spider to weave its web at the opening of one of the underground holes used for habitation (see Fig. 6), where lived a man called Bambou Diara. The latter watched the insect and they called in his friend, Kari Mariko. They wished to imitate the web by using the spider's thread which, however, proved too fragile to work with. They then asked the women for their cotton threads. Holding a twig of straw on which he had wound the thread, and having secured the warp, as had the insect, to the two rocks protecting the entrance, Bambou imitated the spider and made a kind of round fan, shaped like the web with coarse loops. When he had woven two, he joined them with a rope made of nyama bark, thus obtaining the first loincloth (mbogo nimba).

Kari Mariko had watched the work and had noticed the difficulty with which his friend threaded the woof through the warp. He got the idea of winding the thread on a thin stick more resistant than the straw and of placing this in a stone trough which would slide easily between the elements of the warp. This was the first shuttle (kuruni). He wound the thread on it in three bobbins, the symbol of masculinity, thus consecrating weaving as man's work. The threads were then stretched horizontally and the shuttle was used vertically, thus cutting across the warp each time it went up or down (Fig. 6).

All came to see the work of the two artisans and named the village where they lived the "village of intelligence, hakilidugu." They learned from them the art of weaving and today the names of the two friends are still invoked over the plate of food which each apprentice must eat before beginning his instruction.

Following the breaking of a taboo in the course of a fishing expedition on the river, the spindle whorls ceased to fall from the sky. Since then, fishermen /105/ produce them by mixing clay with karite oil and drying them in the sun.

773 286 [785] The loom was invented later. The positions of the warp and woof and the practice of breaks and knots were modified. The loom was formerly the object of nocturnal human sacrifices whereas the shuttle received lesser sacrifices in the day time (1).

1. At present, looms are set in the ground above a piece of pottery, the bottom of which is pierced before the pot is buried.

The stone on which women clean the cotton, kaba, represents the sky and recalls the divine origin of cotton and of the technology relating to it.

Clothing

291 Clothing which has intimate contact with the human body is a part of the person wearing it. On the other hand, the material of which it is made, and the various elements which compose it and which are associated with one or another aspect of Bambara metaphysics, exercise an influence on the wearer. The choice of clothing is rarely a matter of chance or individual taste and the various manifestations of social or religious life usually obligate people to wear appropriate clothing, the symbolism of which is linked to the action or circumstance under consideration. The role of the garment appears as early as infancy: a newborn wears around his loins a cotton thread, dyura dyuru, which is both a protection (for it "solidifies his spinal column") and a foreshadowing of what he will wear later. When he reaches the required age, a family reunion takes place on the day he is dressed for the first time. Before this, it is necessary for him to have dreamed of his first garment and to have talked to his mother of this dream; she then begins to spin the necessary cotton. Before dressing, the initiate proceeds with an ablution called mayadyi (literally, water of the person's action) in water taken from the Niger or from a pond of Faro's. The dressed child is told "that he is now a man and may become a member of the ndomo (2)"; then his kinsfolk tease

2. Society of the uncircumcised (see p. 222).

291 him and joke with him, indicating by semi-ritual jokes his accession to a new status.

291 773 Men's first garment was the skirt of nyama fibers (Fig. 8, A). The bark was beaten and prepared by means of a club, a wooden club, gosilande or kuruninde, which is /106/ supposed "to contain potentially all human technology invented as the need arose." It is said of this club that it is "the mold of perfection and the place from which all useful things issue." The club was also originally a primitive instrument of rhythm (1); the hammering of blows "chased away the evil

[783] 1. kow dyele bwo yoro. On certain occasion when the Komo masks are brought out, the chief carries on his head the gosilande which represents the universe. Certain collective purifications are also executed with this instrument at the crossroads (see p. 186).

[755] sounds emitted by Téliko at the time of his revolt." Even today, a deafmute is seated near the gosilande which is prayed to so that he may be rid of his infirmity. The clothing of a woman in labor, in [844] order to purify it, is beaten with the gosilande at the same time the infant utters its first cry. Dyed clothing is beaten not only to make the color penetrate, but also to chase out any impurity.

When they first learned about cotton, and after the invention of weaving, the Bambara made garments which are in disuse today but of which they still make specimens for ritual purposes. In fact, with the exception of the loincloth, these ancient garments are worn only during religious ceremonies and their principal function is to represent the ancestors who were their progenitors.

291 773 386 The first garment woven was an imitation of the fiber skirt. The men made loincloth (mboko nimba) still worn today by the uncircumcised and dyed it yellow, wolo (2) (Fig. 8, B), a color which

[824] 2. This dye is made with the leaves of the ngalama (Angeissus leiocarpus), which are boiled, dried, and pulverized. The powder is put in water.

represents that which a certain disease gives to the black's skin,

291 which they got rid of by means of this dye. A live swallow was im-
773 mersed in the liquid, which was obtained by soaking the leaves and to
386 which was mixed ground charcoal, and later was released, thus conse-
crating the dye into which the loincloth was soaked.

291 The next garment was made of two strips, dyo kama (literally,
773 shoulder nets), which were hooked on to each arm. The strip on the right arm, representing male, was attached by three thin straps (male number). The other was attached by four straps, four and left being female. The wearer would lie down over the strip on the right side

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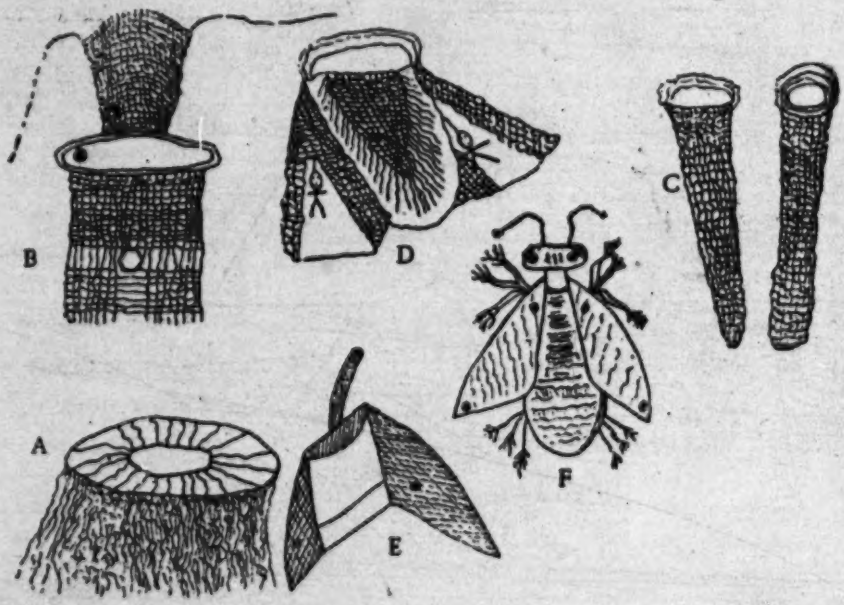

[787]

Fig. 8 —Ancient Clothing of the Bambara.
(A) The skirt of nyama fibers; (B) the loincloth; (C) the "shoulder nets"; (D) the tunic; (E) the bonnet are made of dyed and woven cotton threads. (F) the dung beetle, an insect which plays a part in geomancy. (Drawing by an informant).

and would cover himself with that on the left (Fig. 8, C).

Next, men made a kind of short tunic, wolo kama (literally, partridge wings), which was dyed red (Fig. 8, D). At the top of the openings where the arms passed were suspended /107/ two little figures (mani) carved out of wood. These represented the souls of the wearer, "took their life from the veins, and gave their strength to the

291 T73

arms on which they rested." The center of the garment represented the chest, the liver, and the heart of the wearer; the horizontal threads the veins and arteries. The supporting collar, made of three bark fibers of the da tree, was "the individual's double during his sleep." Sweat was the offering made to this garment. In the cold season it was replaced by salt. The first time a man wore this garment he would pray: "Garment, we wear you in the name of our old ancestors and in honor of those who created you."

The ancestors drawn on the sanctuaries and the granaries are all equipped with caps, banfla, which they wore in olden times (Fig. 8, E). At the top were affixed a wooden picket and a hyena tail, through which the sky gave its strength to man who in return /108/ would send his "through the wind." The cap (čema), made of strips of yellow dyed cotton, had wings (bamadae), symbol of the ears: the lines on the right wing assured numerous offspring and those on the left, a secure and righteous life. The wings also recall those of the swallow, the water spirit's messenger entrusted with carrying into the womb, at the moment of sexual union, the drop of blood containing the child's life and soul. The two indigo dyed spots on each wing are the symbol of this womb.

The cap as a whole (farofla) was the "link maintaining the life of man," who is himself represented by the line which encircles the cap. It protected him against cold, disaster, and death. It was also the symbol of Faro's home and power. When he received it, the wearer would say: "Wing of the cap, cap, son of Faro, I have drawn you with strength. Oh, swallow" (1).

1. Bamade, bonza, farodè, ni be ke ola ni barikaye, nanale. The primitive clothes described above were observed by an informant at Bougoula and are presented to the postulants at the moment of their initiation.

After the invention of the loom, clothes were no longer made piece by piece. Bands of cotton made by weavers were used, cut up, fitted, and sewn—a technique still observed today throughout the Sudan.

291 T73 S31

There exists a "science of the bands," finew tno or finew dongo, which is familiar to all those who wear the traditional clothes. It

291 773 531 rests upon the knowledge of the symbolism of colors, drawings, and numbers. The bands are numerous and each one represents one aspect of metaphysics, one fragment of the myth. Thus, the story of Mousso Koroni is told in four successive bands (Pl. III, from 5 to 8). The wearing of the bands depends upon the physical or moral state of the wearer, upon his functions and activities (1).

1. We give below the description of a certain number of these bands, chosen from the ones most representative; we intend to publish a complete study of this aspect of a technique most revealing of Sudanese psychology.

291 773 531 522 The white band, finin muku dye, represents Faro, being as white and luminous as the sky and the rays of the sun. White denotes wisdom and purity of the spirit, the purity of blood. The one who appears in public thus dressed is respected because he affirms thereby his desire to follow religious rules. It is also the color of offerings made to the spirit. A piece of white cloth is sometimes hung over the door of a home where people have just /109/ made a sacrifice. A sick man throws three white bands into the river, or gives them to a person poorer than himself. A white cloth, worn over a man's shoulder, "strengthens his nerves and articulations." At nightfall every evening, all the children put on a tunic of this color. Thus, despite the darkness, they are "in Faro's light" and will recognize each other in times to come as the children of one father, one family, one blood. The marriage veil is made up of eleven bands each measuring eleven cubits; these are not sewn together but rather basted in spirals. Thus dressed, the woman goes in the night to her future husband's village, in the luminous word of Faro and surrounded by the twenty-two elements of creation, the eleven spirals intersecting each other on the right and left. A dead person is also dressed in white: trousers with six strips representing man and his dya, and a hat with three bands. He is rolled up in a blanket of the same color and visitors place upon the corpse pieces of white cloth or cowrie shells. The whole signifies good will, sincerity, and devotion toward Faro of the deceased who must be "white under the earth" if he has not broken any taboos.

The opposite of white is indigo, konofi, which symbolizes darkness and impurity and which is worn in most cases where the spirit's

291 activity is not involved. Nevertheless, a woman puts on an indigo
773 loincloth the day she resumes sexual relations with her husband after
822 the end of her menses; she retains it until pregnancy. When she is sure
531 of her condition, she puts the loincloth in the sun to purify it and will place the newborn child in it to remind him later that he owes his life to his parents. A dead person who has broken a taboo is buried
[764 in an indigo shroud, the only reminder of light being a white cotton
784] thread which is placed on the corpse as an expression of apology and forgiveness. Since indigo is taboo in most of Faro's sacred places, no one wears it during sacrifices or religious ceremonies.

White and indigo complement each other. To twist a white and
[789] an indigo thread together to make a string used for holding an amulet is to "roll together happiness and unhappiness, as in life."

The dye wolo is the color of yellow copper. It is in this color that the newly circumcised are dressed after the operation and until they are healed. Red, mbegu, is the color of copper and of blood. Hunters who wear a tunic of mbegu are "covered with a garment of blood." The band kayo (Pl. III, a, 1), in which are found these two colors, indigo and white, reproduces the rainbow: the white intervals are symbols of the word and of purity. /110/ A person making a sacrifice sews a piece of this band on his clothing to indicate that he is circumcised, that he is a hunter, and that he is truthful in his actions and words. A band is hung at the gate of the northern entry to the village in order to protect its inhabitants from dangers coming from outside. A man wears it when he has been ill or has suffered serious financial or family difficulties. On the altars, on the doorways, the colors are represented by millet mash, blood, and kola nut extract.
[821 As the rainbow keeps away the rain and dries up water, the kayo
784] strip may not be worn near the river or during sexual intercourse, for it is Faro's taboo.

The band sirakele (literally, a road) (Pl. III, a, 2) represents Faro's descent from the seventh part of the sky down to the seventh part of the earth, the indigo stripe being the dyi fi, "black water," the spirit's earth seat. When put on the loincloth of a married woman, it expresses her rectitude and the good behavior she intends to maintain towards her husband. When worn by a traveler, it prevents him from losing his way.

291 The buguni (1) (Pl. III, a, 3) is "the sun ray Faro gave to Pemba
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1. The word designates the band's place of origin, Bougouni.

291 for his great earthly labors." When clouds form, it is said that Faro
773 "is showing the buguni in the sky" and the diviners advise each person
821 to wear a strip in homage to the spirit and to facilitate the coming of
531 rain. The geomaneer gently rubs the earth, where he is going to draw signs, with a cloth of this design. It is as though he has injected sun, light, and truth into the work he must execute on the impure soil.

291 This band is also called kolõso mako, "necessity of the mixture, "
773 or kami, guinea hen, whose plumage as well as whose fragility the band betokens. In this respect, the buguni symbolizes man's weakness and incompleteness. When placed on a convalescent's clothing, [155] it signifies that the latter has lost some of his vitality during his illness. Dressed in this fashion, he goes to the Niger and bathes so that Faro might heal him. A man who has suffered severe financial losses also wears the buguni. At the market, in public meetings, he will not be made to pay his share of beer because of the band's silent language which is clearer than words. If a widower remarries, he sews a piece of it on his cap in memory of his first wife. The knife of the person offering a sacrifice is wrapped in the buguni, for it "never has enough blood, " also in certain boli which continually crave it.

/111/ In conclusion, the squares of indigo cloth represent the void and darkness; the white ones, fulfillment and light. To wear the buguni signifies hope, the impure or weak man hoping to become pure, strong, and fulfilled.

The bugunimba (literally, large buguni) or nyedẽ (literally, threads of the eye) has the same symbolism. A wound is bandaged with it. A man who has broken a taboo wears a cap of this material; an illegitimate child also wears it. The buguni tyekorole which symbolizes the impurity of Mousso Koroni is used to implore Faro's help in great calamities and for misfortunes without remedy. Thus, the body of a stillborn child is covered with it.

291 The buguni nyama (Pl. III, a, 4), made of twenty-two alternating
773 indigo and white squares, symbolizes creation in its harmonious and
822 orderly entirety. Its separation into two layers recalls the duality of
801 nature, represented by a thin stripe through the middle. A happy man sews an entire strip into his tunic. The man who has difficulties of any kind divides it lengthwise and pins a small piece at the bottom of his garment.

291 773 822 801 The nyeba, "big eye," or koloso tyema, "mixed masculinity" (with femininity), (Pl. III, a, 11) also represents creation, here symbolized by the double layer of five indigo and white bands (1). At

1. On the value of number 5, see pp. 24, 25.

the same time the cloth also symbolizes the complete man, said to be both masculine and feminine. A newborn child, but never an illegitimate one, is clothed in it.

291 773 The band soli (Pl. III, a, 5) represents the good conduct of Mousso Koroni at the beginning of her life as well as her betrayal which brought disorder on earth.

531 [764] In olden times, people who had committed bad deeds were obliged to wear it. Today it is used as the shroud for a child who dies immediately after birth; a strip is sewn to the garment of a recently excised girl or to the loincloth of a woman insured in childbirth. When differences or conflicts arise within a family, a fragment is placed in amulets which the women must then wear.

[828] The wutu nyekorotike (Pl. III, a, 6) pictures the disorderly voyage of Mousso Koroni, her despair and her madness. This pattern is reserved for insane people in order to warn others of their condition.

The band gombo (Pl. III, a, 7) recalls the pursuit of Mousso /112/ Koroni by the god Pemba into the depths of the sky and the earth.

The band tyatyeli (Pl. III, a, 8) a picture of Mousso Koroni's defeat, symbolizes human work. It is given to a courageous and energetic woman. It is circulated among those present at religious ceremonies and its mere presence indicates that nothing here below is obtained without work and that all stems from work. To wear this band strengthens the man who is entering upon a task in a village other than his own.

The band saki is the koblenkaba, "red sky." It symbolizes heat, anger, difficulties, and sorrows. It is woven at the time of marriage negotiations for the purpose of resolving any differences of opinion.

[844] A piece of it is dipped into the blood after birth and then thrown away in order to purify everything.

[822] The blue stripes of dyitala represent impurity, and the red stripes, purification by sacrifice. Whoever has broken a taboo wears the blue, and the red when he is purified. A piece of red cloth may be inserted into the vagina of a young woman, after she has lost her virginity or

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to replace the blood lost in childbirth; this piece is then burned to hasten the healing of the wounds.

The loincloth of a woman who has given birth to twins is made of the sukaba band with large, regular, alternating squares of yellow and indigo. The mother places on the garment as an offering a little of the millet mash she feeds her children for the first time.

The band nyoronga was formerly used for shrouds. The king would wear a whole garment of this or had three bands sewn onto his tunic when he went off to war; thus he wore his own shroud. A brave man would tie a piece of it to the barrel of his rifle to show his indifference in the face of death. A strip was tied to the right hand of those killed on the battlefield as a reward for having done their duty. Today, a shred of this band is hung at the door of a home where a death has occurred; People bandage a wounded limb with it before going to the healer's.

The wutu tyerokole with three stripes is worn by a child born after the death in infancy of numerous brothers and sisters. It represents the departure of these members of the family and their return in the newborn. Shaking such a band in the air honors the seventh sky and the seventh earth and asks their protection for the child. This cloth is never worn at funerals.

/113/ The kemba (literally, mother of scarifications) (Pl. III, a, 10) substitutes for scarifications when it has not been possible to perform them; on the other hand, this band is taboo to those who are ritually scarred.

The warabawolo (Pl. III, a, 12) represents the lion of the Diara: the first son of this family was born on this cloth. A boy born with a lock of hair on his forehead is seated on the cotton band to make him strong and rich. Formerly the king made a rug for his throne out of it. Since the lion is their taboo, the Diara do not have the right to wear it or even to see it.

Weapons and Tools

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Originally, men lived by hunting and fishing. But hunger drove them to eat plants of which the first three are the yayalẽ, an aquatic plant commonly found on the shores of the Niger; the narakata, couch grass; and the norolã size, commonly called cramcram(1). Long

1: Dieterlen--153a E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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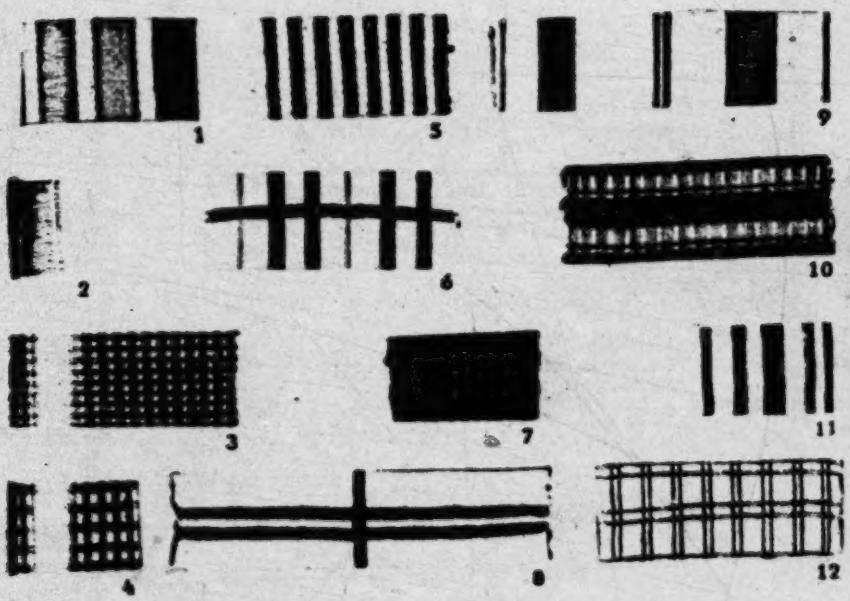

(a) Bands of cotton (the warp is presented vertically).

Plate III

(b) Offering of a band of cotton to the dasiri tree (Soroba).

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1: Dieterlen--153b E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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(a) Pot dipping after firing (Konodimini).

Plate IV

(b) Communal anvil, kula, of the blacksmiths (Konodimini).

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1: Dieterlen--154 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

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1. These three plants are respectively: Andropogon (Hyparrhenia) hirtus, Digitaria debilis, Cenchrus catharticus.

before the cultivation of cotton and cereals was known to them, the Bambara worked the soil with wooden sticks around the base of those grasses whose seeds they then sowed. As their stock of tools developed, they began to make the first hoes and axes. In the case of the Mandé Bambara (2) the origin of these tools is linked with the history of the

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2. The names and the origin of tools of the Bambara of the Ségou region are different.

blacksmiths, numu, who form a kind of caste in this part of Africa as in many others. They practice endogamy, maintain joking relationships, senankuya, with other Blacks, and are in charge of certain cults dedicated to ancestors and to Faro (3).

3. On the myth of the divine origin of blacksmiths, see S. de Ganay, "Notes sur la théodicée bambara." See also infra, p. 53 n. 1

Before the discovery of metal, ancestors of the present blacksmiths worked with wood, then stone. From then on they bore the name of numu, a term which today is reserved exclusively for the artisans of iron, jirifa numu or farafa numu, according to whether they worked with wood or stone (4).

4. L. Desplagnes mentions the historical aspect of the origin and role of the Sudanese blacksmiths (Le Plateau central nigérien /The Central Nigerian Plateau/, p. 110).

The peoples issued from the intermixture of the ou, shepherds (Getules), with the ar, sedentary tribes (Fari), have already been pointed out in earliest antiquity by writers, historians, and geographers who called them Numidians. Salluste tells us that "The Faronsũ, in mixing with the

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getules (gne-Toules), formed the nation of Numidians.

But according to tradition, these half-breed Numidians, today called Noumous, were the first initiators among primitive peoples of the industrial arts; thereafter the title of Noumous was kept and applied to all blacksmiths."

And in the footnote on the same page: "But in Nigerian countries, this term for blacksmith, Noumou, does not necessarily contain the notion of a metallurgist."

/114/ All blacksmiths said to be of "pure blood," that is to say those who belong to the three families of Fané, Koumaré, and Balo, are descended from the Gwonna, who came from the underground village of Gwondougou and to whom goes the glory of having discovered iron.

According to informants, the word Gwonna comes from gwã̃, a name usually given to the hearth of the forge, which designates precisely the place from which the ore is extracted and where it is treated. The high furnace is called gwã̃ so. The gwã̃ tuku munu, extracting blacksmith, is the only one able to perform important rites. The word Fané derives from fã̃, which designates the forge in its entirety. Koumaré comes from kuma, word. It is the Koumaré who are charged [537] with the responsibility of debating in council meetings or in public gatherings. The word Balo recalls the fact that the bearers came to settle in former days on the shores of the Niger, ba.

The Gwonna are senãnku of the other blacksmiths. Moreover, in the villages where they live together with other artisans, they are by right the chiefs of the Komo and guardians of the sanctuaries where the ancestral tools are kept. Only if they fail in their obligation will the blacksmiths belonging to other families assume these duties.

The titles of the Gwonna are linked to the mythical origin of the forge which is under the domination of the Téliko spirits, masters of the air and wind, hence of the bellows and fire.

773 564 326 They inherited them from the eight ancestors who, before the appearance of death, were transformed into bee eaters (tatugu kononi) by the balanza and who received the power to activate or to extinguish fire (1).

1. See p. 43.

The Téliko spirits, jealous of the independence of these new beings, resolved to subdue them and waged war on them. The birds, who had no weapons, bewailed and a Gwonna blacksmith took pity on them; he requested axes, hoes, and arrows from the men of his family and gave them to the birds, receiving in return the promise of revelations which would be useful to him. Having made this arrangement, the birds, armed with weapons, went to meet Téliko at the place called gonya. They used their weapons in a gigantic conflict in which neither adversary could vanquish the other.

/115/ The birds then returned to earth and thanked the blacksmiths by teaching them three secrets necessary to the good progress of their work:

1. How to build their altars by mixing in a panther skin cold water, iron, and a stone, soul of the forge.
2. How to protect from the fire the hands of women potters.
3. How to make and consecrate the circumcision knife.

Since these revelations, the Gwonna venerate these teachers, thus raising the number of their ancestors to sixteen: the first eight transformed into birds who had not the use of speech, and the eight others who received the word from Faro.

564 326 In each village the patriarch of the Gwonna holds the title of kotigi (literally, owner of things). He guarantees the custody of the ancestral tools deposited in a sanctuary and of the ritual objects which belong to the blacksmiths of the village, and which are kept in his home. In addition, he is the only one who may perform the rituals concerning these tools and the purifications.

The important position of the Gwonna family is translated into ritual. Whereas an ordinary blacksmith, after breaking a taboo, must request the intervention of the kotigi to purify himself, a Gwonna simply asks the members of his own family.

564 326 774 Every blacksmith is regarded as the holder of an excellent tere. He is well-intentioned, affable, and never hurts anyone. It is easy to make friends with him, to joke with him, even if one knows him but a short time. The senankuya relationships which he has with other Blacks also contribute to the cordiality of these ties.

[304] The good tere of the blacksmith is brought into play particularly at circumcision which is preferably entrusted to a Gwonna. Being circumcised by a blacksmith causes the wanzo to diminish rapidly, hastens the healing, and improves the tere. A blacksmith is reputed to have the power of transforming himself at will into an animal or a plant. In those places where hyenas are venerated as the animal [825] protectors of a village (dasiri), they are always considered as the blacksmith's ancestors who have undergone metamorphosis. (1).

1. Particularly in the village of Konodimi, situated 21 km. to the southwest of Ségou.

773 564 326 412 The ritual paraphernalia now preserved in each village comprise models of all the tools manufactured by the blacksmiths since their first appearance.

a. Wooden tools The craftsmen first used wood, gradually changing the shape of the objects. From a simple stick /116/ (generally in sunzun) (2) or from a rough-hewn block, they gradually made more

2. Diospyros mespiliformis. The wood of this tree is very hard.

perfect tools, obtaining the shape desired by rubbing and polishing on rocks.

773 564 326 411 The first weapon used in hunting was a throwing instrument in the shape of a boar-spear, the semenkala (from kala, handle, Fig. 9, A). Hewn from one piece, it comprised three distinct parts: (1) the bulonda; (2) the semenu; and (3) the koli (literally, hook). Men threw the object with all their strength at the pursued animal or else they dug into the earth where their prey was hiding with the pointed end (semena) which was often poisoned with a viper's venom. The weapon was the object of blood sacrifices carried out on the koli and destined to increase its strength.

773 The first agricultural tool was the yirewolo (literally, noble, Fig.
564 9, B), thus named because of its antiquity, mogokoroba (literally, old
32 person, ancestor).
41 b. Stone tools Later, craftsmen learned to use stone. They used
[172] neolithic axes called "thunder stones" (1) which were used as scissors.

1. The Bambara, like other Blacks of the Sudan, attributed divine origin to certain neolithic axes (see p. 71. It would seem that a great many primitive tools had been found by them in the area at the time of their arrival.

Those of the Gwondougou were at all times famous for their solidity. The craftsmen worked together and when they had rough-hewn their models, certain individuals among them were delegated to sharpen these by rubbing them on a rock.

The farakun (literally, stone head) (Fig. 9, D) was the first axe the handle of which was invented by an artisan who, having poisoned the sharp edge of his tool, wished to try it out on a tree. He sank the stone into a young tree trunk with the idea that the leaves would dry up of themselves. But he died without having ascertained the result. Later a passerby, having tried in vain to remove the stone from the tree, cut the wood above and below it, and in handling this new tool, was surprised at its efficiency. The use of the hafted axe spread among men who utilized the fiber of the nyama to tie the stone to the wood. In addition, the stone could be separated quickly from the handle and used as a knife to cut meat or bones. The handle was used as a pointed stick with which to dig in the ground and to attack animals.

It is probable that hafting was also applied to wooden hoes made in two sections and used /117/ for a long time in areas where there was no hard stone. In fact, a myth concerning the discovery of the cultivation of cotton, which preceded that of cereal grains, mentions the fact that men used to take their handles home, but left the ends of their hoes at the crossroads each day in honor of the local spirit.

c. Iron tools Finally, the Gwonna discovered iron and developed the science of metallurgy (2).

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2. The Blacks consider that the discovery of iron and metallurgy are due to the Gwonna. It is, however, not impossible that this technology was imported by craftsmen who came from the Mediterranean.

At a time when the men had left the village of Gwondougou, taking their altars with them, two girls left their home and went to live with two artisans of the Fané and Koumaré families.

[532]

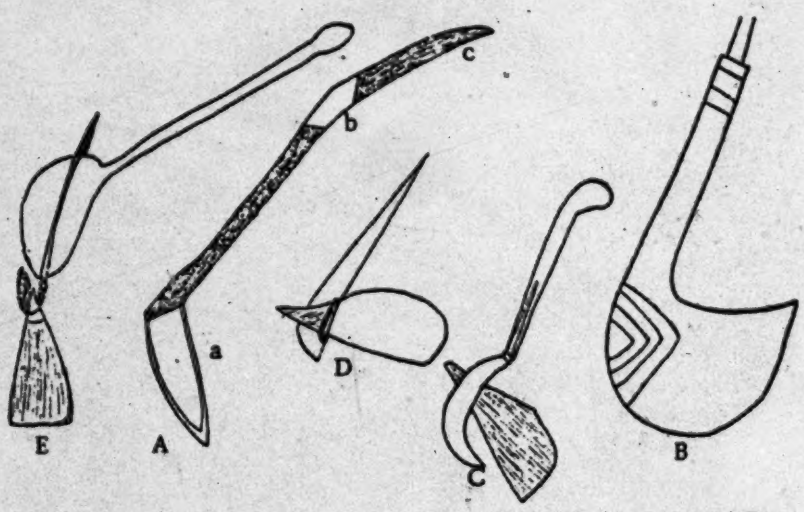

Fig. 9 —Weapons and tools of wood (A and B), of stone (C and D), of iron (E) of the ancient Bambara. (Drawing by an informant).

When the men returned to the village to get some hard stone which they would like to use, they were very much troubled not to find their girls. They dug the ground to search for them, thinking that they had been buried, since men in those days lived in laid-out underground holes. In the course of this work they discovered some rocks which were hitherto unknown to them and which are called farabele. The men thought these rocks beautiful and wished to use them. When placed in fire they were changed and became so hard /118/ that the hammers with which the men attempted to shape them split. The pieces of iron were then used as projectiles to replace the stones of the slings. But the blacksmiths, who had abducted the young girls and who had returned to the village with their wives, saw the new substance and suggested the idea of making axes out of it.

773 564 326 412 The first forged tool, the kongobwona (literally, to abandon hunger), is still used by blacksmiths today as a ritual axe (Fig. 9, E).

It is made up of a wooden handle terminating in an enlargement which forms its bulk, and pierced by a bent iron rod which in turn holds the cutting edge (farabye) of the axe proper. The handle is very long, allowing the man to work without bending over.

The tool justifies its name for it brought prosperity to the craftsmen. The symbolism of the different sections shows this: the enlarged part of the consecrated model, which each blacksmith keeps on his altar and which is the object of regular rituals, is hollowed out and holds money, millet, and copper. The iron rod which pierces it represents at its lower extremity the tongue of the oldest of the Gwonna, and at its upper extremity that of the youngest, thus recalling the actions and the words of those who discovered the metal for the benefit of all.

Later, blacksmiths manufactured other models of iron axes and hoes, copying those previously used, but reducing their size.

Each day the end piece of the wooden hoes was abandoned at the crossroads after they had been used in honor of the local spirit. The worker kept only the handle and carved a new tool for the following day. The handles of hoes and axes were considered to be people because they were impregnated with the vital force of those who held them. The farmer left the cutting edge (of stone or iron) in his field and brought home the handle which he placed on his mat at night.

[782] Weapons and tools were the objects of regular sacrifices. The handle was removed and the blood of victims would flow first into the hole used to secure it, then on the cutting edge, while the officiating person recited a prayer.

773 564 326 412 778 Today, the assemblages of ancient tools are called makorobaw ka minew (literally, tools of the great ancestor). Considered as the most respectable and precious /119/ testimony of their civilization, models of each object are kept in sanctuaries called makoroba so (literally, house of the ancestors) which are generally natural caves or holes dug in the ground, reminiscent of primitive habitations. These tools are identified with the ancestors who used them and who were, long before the organization of religious societies, the object of a regular cult. That is why, in deference to this fundamental hierarchy, they are presented to the circumcised in front of the family altars (1) at the time of the initiation of the Komo. Similarly, they

1. Particularly in the village of Konodimini in the Ségou region.

773 564 326 412 778 are removed from the sanctuaries, honored, and replaced before the Komo altars during the agricultural and funerary rituals; to fail to observe this rule would constitute the breaking of a taboo and entail the most serious disorders.

In the course of the annual ceremony consecrating the dead, these tools are carried to the cemetery and receive as many victims as do the dead, for they represent the ancestors.

The kotigi brings them to the same place on two other occasions: during the agricultural ceremonies carried on after the growth of the ear of corn and after threshing the harvest. Axes and hoes are presented one by one at the tombs of the dead and then, reunited in the center of the cemetery, each of them is used once to cut a branch or to dig the soil. This ritual gesture recalls the use which the ancestors made of them.

The Forge

326 826 The blacksmith establishes his workshop under a shed, usually located in one of the squares or at the entrance to the village. It is the simplest of its kind and involves a minimum of equipment. The forge represents the craftsman: the furnace his body, the bellows his testicles, the blast pipe his penis, the fire his head. When the red hot metal is beaten with the hammer, a replica of the gosilande, which symbolizes the universe, the sparks are the lightning and thunder bolts.

326 778 The altar of the forge, sometimes situated to the west of the hearth, contains blackened hoe, pickaxe and axe handles, coal (fininkoro, literally, old coal) ashes kneaded with clay (buguri, literally, ashes of the hearth), all of which belonged to former owners, and finally an axe kongobwona called "mother of the altar," a smaller replica of the ancestral axes.

The bulk of the wood which holds the iron hooks and the blade /120/ is hollowed out and forms a kind of storage divided into three compartments.

The upper one contains money so that whatever happens, the blacksmith will have means to live.

In the central compartment are placed copper and iron, metals which the blacksmith works, as well as water, basic element and preferred seat of Faro, master of the word.

326 778 243 The lower compartment contains millet from a field called kongobwona foro, reserved for the needs of the cult of the forge. This land is placed under the guardianship of the patriarch belonging to the Gwonna family, and its upkeep is assured by the community. The seeds are given by each blacksmith to the old man who sows them himself. The work of cultivation and threshing is done communally. The millet is stored in the old man's granary and each blacksmith receives a share. This share is not eaten, but is put aside. From time to time the artisan takes a few seeds which he places as an offering, on his altar, and which remain for a time in the compartment reserved for them; then they are considered to have been eaten by the axe and are removed and replaced by others. Part of the millet is kept as seed for the following year.

326 778 789 Each compartment is open and the blacksmith may insert his fingers; if his earnings are insufficient, he rubs his body and tongue with the hand which he has just dipped into the pocket containing money; the price, set by the spoken word, will not be questioned by the client. If he goes to work in his field, he places his hand into the millet each morning to draw upon the strength it contains and to improve the results of his agricultural work. If he burns himself while working at the forge, he dips his fingers into the third compartment and cools himself in Faro's water. It is this same water which a young artisan must drink at the beginning of his apprenticeship.

326 778 776 The triangular iron, farabye, which constitutes the axe proper is placed under the power of three spirits belonging to the group of air spirits: A gayru who revealed iron to men; Tengu who taught them Faro's supremacy; and Gulle. The first two are the masters of the bellows and direct the work as a whole; the third does their bidding and teaches men the technology of ironwork (1). When the owner

1. The spirit would have refused to teach the blacksmiths the working of copper and gold, as these two metals belonged to Faro who reserved for himself the right to use them. Since iron was black he had abandoned its use to the spirits of the air.

of the altar dies, the /121/ axe is removed and placed in the village sanctuary where the ancestral tools are kept. But the remaining objects are inherited by the son. 428

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In addition, in each blacksmith's home, a replica of the kongobwona axe preserved in the common sanctuary, constitutes the family altar, passed on from father to son, on which the interested party offers to his ancestors regular or occasional sacrifices. Sometimes it also possesses a small iron plate upon which is engraved a drawing representing the creation and in particular the "spirals of the creative spirit at the cardinal angles," the multiplication sign, etc. The angles of this object are drawn up to indicate that the world is lifting itself up, awakening, and constantly reviving.

The forges of the village artisans are generally grouped in a public square, around a large anvil, kula, held in a wooden piece forming its base and buried deep in the ground (Pl. IV, b). In front of this communal anvil judicial affairs are settled, such as marriages or broken agreements; before it vows are pronounced and solemn promises are made to the boli. It is also here that the purifications for breaking taboos take place.

The blacksmiths are also communal owners of a certain number of ritual objects which are usually kept by the kotigi and brought out for religious ceremonies. Among these, the nege dyun (literally, mother of iron) (1) is a lump of iron forged in the likeness of the

1. Dyun means "mother" in archaic language.

semẽkala (see Fig. 9, B), on which the kotigi draws small lines. Some of these lines represent the heads of each of the Gwonna blacksmiths; others, well separated from the first, recall the heads of the artisans belonging to other families. The whole symbolizes the total number of blacksmiths in the village. The nege dẽ (literally, son of iron) is a ritual bell also decorated with lines representing members of the blacksmith families.

After it has been made, the nege dyun is placed in the sanctuary of ancestral tools. It remains there two or three months in order to become saturated with the strength of the ancestors and from time to time receives the blood of sacrifices performed at night. It is after this period that it is placed with the nege dẽ in the kotigi's home.

Each artisan offers individual sacrifices on the kongobwona axe kept in his home as well as on the objects /122/ contained in the altar of his forge; at the same time his tools receive libations of boiled millet mash.

326 In addition, each year the blacksmiths join together and offer a
778 sacrifice on the communal anvil. All tools are placed around it,
796 overflowed with the blood of the victims.

An annual ceremony which also brings the craftsmen together has the purpose of asking Faro to help in the cooling of the wrought iron and to give the water into which the iron is dipped the strength to fulfill its function. Assembled before the kotigi's forge, they bring a certain number of tomatoes which are first presented to the altar, then to the ancestral axe farakun on which each one in turn licks with his tongue.

Keeping their mouths closed so as not to let the strength thus gathered escape, they all walk toward the river, while one of the [534 participants strikes up, on the ritual bell (nege dɛ̃) with a lump of 533] (nege dyun), the rhythm called klide fo (literally, rhythm of the sons of the testicles) (1) addressed to the one-arm blacksmith, the

1. Kli dɛ̃, "son of the testicle," is one [522] of the ritual jokes addressed to the blacksmiths by their senãnku.

bolokuruni, Faro's companion. Once on the bank, the kotigi undresses and throws himself into the water. When re reappears on the surface, all the participants open their hands the better to seize the strength of Faro and his companion, which the man is supposed to bring back. They rush to help him dress and the one who succeeds in touching him believes he receives Faro's special favors.

The tomatoes are then squashed into a gourd and the pulp is thrown into the river at a deep spot where each participant draws water and drinks to communicate with Faro. The group then returns, bringing back in the gourd a little water into which each one dips his individual axe, starting with the patriarch who, at the end of the ceremony, drinks up the rest.

326 If a woman is sterile, she asks the help of the three spirits protect-
778 ing the forge as they have the reputation of being very prolific.
842 Without her presence, the blacksmith crouches before the altar with his hands spread out, his head lowered, and prays. The woman must then swear to respect scrupulously the taboo of the invoked spirits, which is to pronounce their name. She may also ask the blacksmith to implore the help of the ritual ashes of the altar.

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124 Taboos Provided with vital force and a soul, nì, the forge, a living being, is surrounded by taboos aimed at protecting its material and spiritual integrity.

These taboos, numbering seven, are peculiar to the forge and to the altars which it contains; they concern not only the /123/ blacksmiths, but also his clients, the passers-by, whatever sex they may belong.

[252] 1. None may cook meat on the fire of the forge; it would be equivalent to "eating the meat of the Soba spirits." To break this rule deprives the fire of its strength and causes the abdomen of the person breaking the taboo to swell (1).

1. It is said of the culprit: soko dyeni bala, fa ta sababu yala: "he is full of meat cooked on the fire of the forge."

2. No insult may be uttered near the forge, particularly if it is of a sexual nature (2). This would be equivalent to insulting the fire;

2. Neni teke fã nda la: "Insults are not to be spoken at the door of the forge."

the flame would waver and, despite the bellows, no heat would rise from the hearth.

[201] 3. The sole of the foot and the palm of the hand are never presented to the fire, for the forge is alive and just as these same gestures made towards another human being would bring about physical disorders, so the various parts of the forge are vulnerable and may break (the hammer or anvil) or tear (the membrane of the bellows) (3).

3. Se ndege tere te jira fa na: "The tere of the sole of the foot must not be presented to the forge."

4. Any quarrel or misunderstanding disturbs the forge, upsets it, and harms the work (4).

4. Dadyuguya, filibatya, kunasirinlenya, konodyuguya te kẹ fã nda la: "Meanness,

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hypocrisy, humiliation, and cheating are not done at the door of the forge."

5. Envy, jealousy, and ill humor are generally bad for the blacksmith who loses his "turn of the hand." He must "have a pure heart" (1).

> 1. Numu te keleya note i bolo na tye: "The blacksmith must not be jealous, otherwise his hand is spoiled."

6. A mirror must never be brought near the forge; it would take hold of its soul which resides in the axe at the altar (2).

> 2. Dugalle te gere fã na a kanana; ka fã ni tã: "The mirror must not be brought near the forge; it will take the soul from the forge."

[834] 7. Sexual relations near the forge prevent its functioning (3).

> 3. Noa te gere fa nda la: "No obscene action may take place near the door of the forge."

Breaking the taboos of the forge is equivalent to attacking the virility of the blacksmith, for the bellows are his testicles. Thus the artisans present themselves naked before the culprit to shame him; he is seated on the communal anvil and water in which large [783] millet (keninge) has been soaking is poured over his head to purify the instrument (4).

> 4. If the fault is irreparable, the kneeling chief crushes three grains of large millet (keninge) on the anvil, a gesture which symbolizes the death of the culprit whose name he pronounces at the same time.

326 /124/ The affected owner then proceeds to reconstruct his forge.
783 Having taken a piéce of charcoal, a piece of iron, a piece of leather, and his tools, he goes to the kotigi to ask him to perform the necessary purifications. In the presence of the parents gathered around the forge and in front of the culprit, the kotigi officiating alone, crushes the iron, leather, and charcoal, and then goes to fetch the kongobwona axe kept in the sanctuary of ancestral tools. He places all this before the altar facing the east, and recites the following prayer over a gourd filled with water, which he holds in his hands:

"You forge, ancient thing, you belong to us, to us Gwonna; so and so has broken his taboo, I am his senãnku and am apologizing to you for this deed. I have said: forge; I have said: blacksmith of Gwondougou" (1).

1. E fã, fẽ koro, e ye an gwonna ta ye;
kari macina ye tnẽ tyẽ, ne ye senãnku ye,
nye delili kẹ a ko la; ngo fã; ngo
gwondugu numu.

The axe is then washed in water to which has been added some earth taken out of the hut. Next, the officiator completely demolishes the tainted forge and rebuilds it with the mud thus obtained while one of the Gwonna witnesses keeps a little of this earth in a piece of cloth as a testimony to the reconstruction.

The blacksmith slits the throats of two roosters over the new forge while the ingredients groundup by the kotigi are placed on the altar. The following day, accompanied by his parents, he goes to ask the chief of the Komo to proceed with the purification. The members of the society meet at his home and the masker whistles into the forge to chase away ultimately the miasmas provoked by the breaking of the taboo. The fowls brought by the participants are sacrificed on the forge and all join in drinking beer offered by the interested party. The following day, the chief of the Komo calls for the latter's wives. Each in her turn, they place their heads on the anvil, an act which chases away the nyama which they have been concealing since the offense was committed, and then leave on it, cowrie shells and kola nuts, as an offering.

Pottery

323 The ancient Bambara did not know about pottery. At the time they
773 lived in caverns, they let their meat dry in the sun on the rocks. Next, they manufactured receptacles by hollowing out stones, of which certain unused millstones /125/ seen today are copies. When they had invented fire, they cooked meat by spitting it with skewers of green sunzun wood and by exposing it to flames and live coals.

Later, they shaped and dried vessels of coarse clay, imitating the hollowed-out stones. One of these vessels, which was exposed to the fire in order to cook the food it contained, was observed to have changed color, hardened, and become more resistant. In this way they developed the technology of making pottery at a time when they still had only wooden tools.

323 Since this technology is related to the invention of fire, the wives
326 of the blacksmiths were the first to practice it.(1). Today they form
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1. The different techniques of pottery making were supposedly revealed to the village of Gwondougou (see p. 155) by the Soba spirits of the crossroads.

a society (tô) in each village and own many altars entrusted to the care of the head of the society.

The principal altar, the dyo kala, which represents the thumb of the potters, is made of wood carved in the shape of a thumb and engraved with symbolic lines. To learn her trade, each initiate is lightly touched on the head with it. The head of the society spills her blood over it in the case of a broken taboo affecting the society. But its principal function is to be the receptacle for the spiritual forces of the group: upon a member's death, this object, placed upon the corpse, gathers up the soul which escapes from the body.

[252] In certain villages, the pots with holes, ñintin, used for cooking couscous, are placed near the village upon the pile of ashes from the great hearth where the pots are fired (see Pl. IV, a); they also serve as altars at the time when the potters are consecrated.

323 Since her childhood the potter, following the example of her
561 seniors, practices kneading and shaping little pots, bokofani (literal-
575 ly, little clay pots). After excision at the required age, she joins

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[561] the society during a public consecration which she receives with several others, the group forming an age grade.

After an apprenticeship of seven days, the potters decide upon the date of the ceremony which is celebrated at the firing spot near the altars. Each member provides a hairpin (bandigi), which represents her on this occasion, and the skin of a hedgehog. Disrobed in front of the assembled villages, each girl is seated in turn on the altar as an aged woman examines her genitals to verify her virginity and the proper execution of the excision.

/126/ If the young girl is no longer a virgin, she is publicly de-
[831] clared dangadè (literally, bastard) and finds herself automatically excluded from the society; she will never be able to receive the potter's title. Otherwise, a proclamation is made immediately to the great joy of the public. If the excision has not been judged
[304] sufficient, the patient is given the title of potter after having submitted to a new operation performed in such a way that the blood runs over the pottery (1).

1. If excision is not possible, the operation takes the form of a wound inflicted with the hedgehog's skin (see p. 243).

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867 An old woman then appears seated before members of the age grade and instructs them. She tells of the origin and history of pottery, apprising them of the difficulties of the craft such as fatigue, burns, etc. She teaches them patience towards the client and enumerates the rules which will have to be observed during their lifetime: to be pure in heart and to hate no one; not to undertake work shortly after having had sexual relations; to work in silence; to respect all taboos in general.

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431 She then makes a libation of karite oil on the altar and rubs it on the bodies of the initiates who must run their tongues over the pottery, thus making an oath. Sheep, brought by the initiates' parents, are then killed by having their throat cut over the hearth in the name of the potters while the elders of the society present to the initiates gifts consisting of several pots which they will sell for profit while waiting for their first work. This gift is moreover a sign of adoption.

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784 The utensils are made with clay, mbogo pasa, taken from the bottom of the watercourse or along the river's edge; they belong to

323 317 784 Faro. These places have as taboos the wearing of indigo and pregnancy. No pregnant woman may approach them without provoking the death of the child she is carrying, thus ultimately impairing the durability of pottery and seriously harming the society of which she is a member.

323 796 An annual sacrifice is offered by the potters at the end of the winter season when, the level of the river having dropped and the banks lowered, they return for the first time to collect the clay which they need. Dressed in white, they bring out their hoes and the sickle with which they cut the damp grasses used to cover the pots on the hearth during firing, while the head of the society carries the altars. The objects are placed in a pile on a bed of nyama fibers used for separating them from the ground. The throats of two red roosters are cut open over this pile while a prayer is addressed to Faro, requesting authorization to take the /127/ mbogo pasa during the year, and seeking his protection and help for the work of the society's membership.

The potters make an annual offering to their altars on the day their husbands sacrifice on the forges. Immediately after the libations, they come and squat before the forge altar on which they throw some ten cowrie shells. They then go to the ñintin, undress, and present to it their genitals from the front and from the back, this gesture being an indication of their submission to the spirits of pottery which are the same as those of the forge. Still naked, they circle the pile of ashes left from the last firing and light a big bonfire; this fire attracts the bee eaters, tatugu kononi, which circle over the flames. They shoot some down with a sling, cook them, and reduce them to ashes which they mix with karite oil; they rub their bodies with this mixture before purifying themselves by going through the flames. As an offering to the spirits, they then throw pots on the fire which they put out before returning home.

323 244 The potters cultivate together a small ritual field in which a female twin sows white peas, tikaninkuru, symbols of their right hand. The produce of this harvest is eaten communally on a mound, walawala, after an offering of several seeds is made to the altars and tools. A potter whose tools are broken by the fire must go through a purification with the products of this field.

326 304 The wives of blacksmiths, whether or not they are potters, are skilled in practicing excision on young girls.

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Chapter 6

THE CULTS

794 The purpose of the Bambara cults, whether they are of individuals, families, or villages, is to promote the functioning of the universe in an orderly way, which includes the preservation and conservation of individuals and the whole community in their spiritual or material forms.

The following chapter is not exhaustive. We have described a certain number of cults selected from the most representative. Under their apparently diverse aspects, shown in their purposes as well as in their modes, all are integrated into the system of Bambara thought.

I. Individual and Family Cults

778 794 Over individual altars sheltered within the family enclosure or preserved in the private room (česo) of their owner, the rituals of "maintaining self" are practiced. They assure the stability of physical (čuafebla, čuafebyeni) and social (dyamana tiɲi jigi) forces; they afford protection outside dangers (mbe ndyugu kɛ); they are the temporary containers of souls at the time of death (kere la boli ni).

Since man must, in many circumstances of his life, remedy any depletion of his strength, these altars represent repositories, relays, in which at least certain elements of his being are integrated. They permit him to regroup or revitalize his physical or psychical forces for his own well-being as well as for that of the community.

A. The česo

In the homes the movable altars are kept in a room called česo (literally, house of man), which is reserved for the /129/ owner and which contains, besides his weapons and agricultural implements, family altars, either collective or individual (1) depending upon

1. The following description is that of the house of Tété, an important citizen of Banankoroni.

778 whether he is head of a family, head of a religious society, or a
794 bachelor.

These objects are hung from the ceiling or hidden away in corners from the looks of people and the risks of impurity. The walls of the room, daubed up to a third of their height /130/ with black earth,

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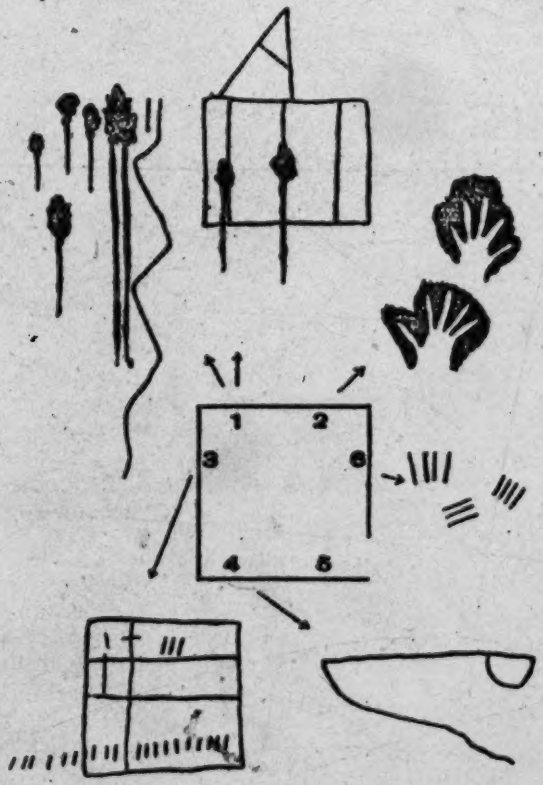

Fig. 10 — Diagram of the česo of Tètè, important citizen of Banankoroni and reproduction of the drawings on the walls: 1. The ancestors and their home. 2. The hands of the living. 3. The sky, space, the earth, and the 22 categories. 4. The Komo's whip. 5. A red stain. 6. The owner (three) and his two wives (four and four).

symbolizing Faro's presence and protection, are covered with paintings and drawings.

778 794 532 On one of the walls, small lines representing the ancestors and a broken line representing the human person are drawn with millet mash; on another, engraved with a sharp point, is a schematic geometrical figure of the ancestral home; it is accompanied by the silhouettes of two hands (see Fig. 10, 1 and 2), the hands of the living, "crossed and reaching out to the world of the dead." The left hand, symbol [826] of disorder, incertitude, and the variations of human conscience, is placed below to the right of the other to recall man's obligation towards his right hand, symbol of order, righteousness, fidelity, and work (1). Thus arranged, the hands express complete submission of

1. In making this drawing the following words are repeated: "I place my right hand on the wall night and day," neben kinin bolo da koko la ßu ni kle.

the living to the ancestors.

Farther away are drawn the divisions of the universe (Fig. 10, 3) with the help of a square divided into three compartments symbolizing from top to bottom: the sky and water, the air, the earth.

In the upper square to the left, a line represents Faro in all his power, sole master of sky, water, and life. A horizontal line recalls his domination over the world. The lines that follow are his children. The total indicates the feminine form of the spirit.

All individual or family sacrifices offered to Faro are performed over his sign which the officiator rubs with copper and crushed tomatoes in order "to thank the spirit who protects his dya, and to pray to the spirit to give his wife children."

The central rectangle is the domain of Téliko: air and wind. The small line which vertically bisects the square on the left represents the spirit attempting to penetrate into Faro's plan to vanquish him. His defeat is indicated by the fact that the major portion of the line is situated in Téliko's domain, since the latter violated only temporarily the boundaries of his adversary.

The lower rectangle outlines the earth, seat of the Soba spirits. The row of 22 short lines which covers it recalls the 22 elements of creation, "the 22 things indispensable to man in this world."

On another wall, fire is indicated by two whips: that of Faro, lightning, and that of Komo, the law. They also recall "the power

778 794 532 of the initiates' word" and are exposed to fire to increase this power (Fig. 10, 4). Beside them, /131/ a large red stain, dyoli ǰikin, painted in ochre, states that man is the sacrificer, that the cult has immolation as its basis. Of such a man it is said that: "he reckons with the proof of the blood (1)" (Fig. 10, 5).

1. Dyoli tamaše mine ba.

Above the bed which consists of a simple mat placed on the ground, three engraved lines symbolize the man and two four lines the two women who alternately share his bed (Fig. 10, 6).

778 794 532 413 In certain villages, the drawings are made by an instrument called ngwoni, used during the rituals of the year's "renewal" (2).

2. Particularly at Banankoroni.

The point of baobab wood, which is used for engraving, is as slim as a slat and fits on to a kind of racket made of sunzun wood which holds a net of da fibers. The hide of a male goat, called soni wolo ni (literally, soul of the skin of sacrifice), and two handles of ngolobe wood (3) complete the assemblage. The net, made of sixteen cotton

3. Combretum michrantum.

threads dyed with red ochre, kolo, is called ngwoni kene ba (literally, great space of the ngwoni) and represents Faro.

778 794 532 Before being used, the instrument is washed with water which will be used later to cook the food for the family. Next, tomatoes are pressed on the net and the juice runs into the hide which forms a pocket; holding the point in the right hand and the handle in the left, one then makes the drawings on the wall of the česo. The seeds of the fruit remain in the pouch until the following year to serve as a testimony to the offering. Next, with a red hot knife the following lines are engraved on the object: four lines, representing Faro, and two 16 lines, multiples of four, the female symbol. After each cut, "a rag saturated with fresh water is placed on it to soothe the pain." The frame is saturated with kola nut extract and four dots, the womb of women, are also marked with a black stone, kolofin. An egg is then smashed on the object to "refresh the soul of the ensemble."

B. The Altars

778 794 Each family head wears a small altar called kere la boli ni (literally, little side altar), which maintains relations with the souls of the members of the family for which he is, in part, responsible. /132/ In case of illness he offers sacrifices on this boli for the recovery of the patient. In case of death, he keeps the soul in it temporarily before carrying it to the collective altar of the Komo (1). He also sacrifices on this

1. The society, the altars, and the role of the Komo are described on pages ff.

altar at the time of sowing.

[763] If the family head is himself very ill, the altar is placed on his head in an effort to replace the soul which is escaping with that which the altar contains. If he dies, it is placed on his chest to take in the [764] soul which is then transported to the sanctuary of the Komo. At the end of seven days, the object is given to the deceased's eldest son who, upon becoming family head, sacrifices two goats to the Komo on this occasion.

The ɓuafebla (literally, worn at the hip) is made by a father for his son when the latter attains maturity and is on the point of leading a man's life, farming his own field and founding a family.

If there is no Komo in the village, the father may make it earlier, right after the name-giving ceremony.

The altar is made of hyena tails, scorpion tails, and whole peppers tied with a little stick; it represents the owner's flesh and blood.

It receives an annual sacrifice at the time of sowing after the collective offering tothe Komo. This takes place in the family courtyard in the presence of all the members of the family (2). Moreover,

778 794 773 241 2. The cult rendered on this altar brings the intervention of the Sago spirit whose agricultural role is still obscure at the present stage of the inquiry. He taught men how to water their fields.

"Two birds konodyanfi began to circle and sing above the workers in the fields;

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the latter abandoned their hoes in order to watch them. The birds fetched water with their beaks on the shore of a neighboring pond and returned to pour it at the foot of a millet stalk, the ear of which was not yet formed. The men put a mark on this stalk in order to recognize it and later observed that it produced a finer ear than the others. Imitating the bird, they dampened their plantings and watered their fields; their harvest was considerably improved by it. They kept up this habit and, in acknowledgment, produced a cult to the Sago spirit whose emissaries the birds were and who comes to slake his thirst at the ǰuafebla."

778 it is the object of sacrifices when important business is being handled:
794 marriage, private or administrative action, fight against an epidemic.
[428] A son may inherit his father's altar and keep it with his own which he wears tied to his hip.

The ǰuafebyẽni (literally, little horn at the hip) is composed of a cowrie, taken from Faro's granary, copper which is the altar's soul /133/ (ni), pepper, charcoal, and honey. This mixture is introduced into a ram's horn decorated with cowries at its opening and often wrapped in a red cloth bearing the same ornamentation.

[782] The altar is consecrated on those of the Komo, over which it is passed seven times. The throats of victims are cut, their blood is collected in a gourd, and the boli dipped into it three times before being taken out in the sun to dry.

Its role is one of protection. Its owner carries it during the Komo ceremonies to defend himself against spells, korti, which may be cast by someone in the audience.

It also maintains the integrity of its owner's forces. If the latter faints or goes into a trance, he is returned to his normal state by completely renewing the ingredients which constitute it. When the horn is emptied of its contents, "both the soul of the altar and that of the man" are removed. The container is rinsed out with water from the

778 Niger after which the reconstitution of the altar is carried on and is
794 equivalent to "the taking on a new soul." Each family member comes to the aid of the party concerned: the father gives copper, the women, peppers, the children, charcoal; a new cowrie is removed from Faro's granary.

778 The mbendyuguka (literally, I am on the enemy) is an individual
794 altar which permits its owner to overcome his adversaries and even to
754 attack their life.

The person who wishes to own one makes it after the death of an enemy. He goes secretly to unearth the corpse, shaves off its hair, cuts off its tongue and nails, and removes the eyes.

An elderly owner of such an altar takes it with him to the person who wishes to make one. The latter prepares and mixes the ingredients according to a special ritual and ties them to a hyena's tail. Before a witness who belongs to his age grade, the elder rubs the new altar on the old one seven times while reciting a prayer to consecrate it; he then returns it to its owner (1).

1. Because of its evil powers, the altar may not be made and entrusted to its owner except in the presence of a known witness.

The symbolism of the various parts composing it explain the use to which this altar will later be put. The tongue of the dead man contains his voice and gives to that of the owner the strength to convince those who contradict him in arguments as well as in council meetings. The eyes of the dead man permit him to see what others may not see, or even to blind his enemies by poisoning them with his nails. The hair, evidence of the other parts /134/ of the corpse, contains the nyama of the deceased and is an essential part of the mbendyuguka.

[595] The owner of this altar, which excludes the number four, marries only three wives. Moreover, he cannot mix his own hair with that of another without risking death.

[782] Because of its aggressive character, the mbendyuguka demands victims, dogs or roosters, of red coloring. It gives to whomever owns it a strength which will always be greater than that of his competitors in whatever he may undertake.

778 For this reason it receives sacrifices at the time when the fields
714 are being worked, for trade, marriage, war, and hunting where the
154 person risks his life; it helps to fight illness and death. Immediately after the first sacrifice, it captures the personality and aggressiveness of the dead man and puts them on its owner, making him doubly dangerous to those with whom he is in conflict. But on the other hand, the danger may turn against him and, to a greater extent than anyone else, he risks his life at the slightest broken taboo.

Furthermore, the Komo who disapproves of such operations may, if he considers it useful, loosen the dead man's nyama on the person who is using his spiritual forces and put him in danger of death. Thus a Bambara will hesitate a long time before owning such an altar; in fact very few individuals assume this heavy responsibility.

C. The Chief's Seat

778 In the courtyard of the home of a family head or village chief can
622 be found a pile of wood stuck on the ground and called dyamana tigi jigi (literally, support of the owner of the world) (Fig. 11). This seat symbolizes at once the chief, his power, his social and religious role of supporting the group (1).

1. The seat described below was observed at Banankoroni in the courtyard of the village chief. A similar one is found at Soroba.

The pieces of bent wood which compose it are planted rather deep into the earth above a series of objects. One of these pieces, with a simple bend (in a) is called sinzin, support; the two others, shaped like a T, are called jigi ba jigi (in b) (literally, support of the big support).

FA8 766 The whole lies over the body of an albino (c) buried in a tomb having a ritual form, covered with ancient clothing dyed in wolo and speckled with small black spots made of /135/ bone ash (kolofin), which represent at the same time the embryo in the womb of women and Faro. The head is covered with the cap of primitive men (e).

In (d), three pickets, symbols of man, are stuck through the skin of the albino's forehead; this skin had been removed and seven ritual

622 178 scars symbolizing the person (three and four) are made on it. At the moment the skin is buried under the seat, the following prayer is recited:

"I have sworn in your names by striking on the siriku of Yamba by (burying) the skin from the right and left sides of the forehead; the skin from the forehead (seven times)" (1).

1. Tena wolo fla kini ani numa yamba

[532]

Fig. 11 — The wooden seat of a family head of Banankoroni, representing his joints. It is inserted into the ground in the courtyard above the bones of an albino, those of a child, and various symbolic objects. (Drawing by an informant.)

ka siriku nye di ka fo ani aw čua ye kena, tena wolo.

The prayer recalls here the acts of the fourth ancestor Yamba, who inaugurated the sacrifices of albinos to Faro, and his role as a chief beginning with this mythical period (see p. 46), a role which the present chief must fulfill with the same righteousness. The siriku is a small protective altar usually made from a hyena tail.

In (m) are placed the three principal bones of the albino; the two femurs and the right humerus, "so that the chief may have white

622 118 bones," that is to say, that he may live to be so old that his bones will be visible through his skin which is transparent.

In (n) the bent part of the wood, called kuntigi tigiya yigi (literally, /136/ support of the chief's deed), is planted over the hair of the previously shaved albino (in o) from which it takes its strength.

[801] In (k), twenty-two small sticks are the symbol of the number 22, representing "the ensemble of words received by the ancestor Koumabana who was never caught unawares by anyone." In depositing these sticks, the officiator expresses the wish that the chief may become unbeatable like the ancestor.

[801] In (h), eight small sticks of zekene wood (1) represent the eight

[824] 1. Balanites aegyptica. This bush, according to popular belief, grows over the tomb of a man who died "with rancor and bitterness, as did Koumabana."

ancestors; they signify that man must be, like Koumabana, master of words and that he must be "true to his word."

In (f), the bird tatugu kononi, master of fire, is buried. The prayer recited states that it must be able to penetrate into the earth and come out freely, for since mythical times it has played a decisive role in combats (2).

2. See p. 155. The chief, who is sometimes obligated to declare war, must be able to win it.

In (g) is buried the head of the first child to die in the chief's family, in order to recall the loss suffered and to avoid its recurrence. On the skull are marked the signs of the person: two times 3 and 7, or two times 4 and 7, depending upon the sex of the deceased. In (j) the hair is buried, a testimony to the misfortune and the loss which should be compensated for. In (e) is placed the skin of the forehead, divided into two pieces; the piece on the right signifies that Faro is free to give the child for as long as he chooses; on the piece on the left are engraved the eight signs of the word, recalling that Faro, master of the word, is also master of the destiny of the deceased, whose number has been reckoned among the dead. In (p) a small

622 778 of polished stone called fara yele, "stone that rejoices," expresses the wish that the chief's rule prosper.

The seat, taken as a whole, represents the chief's skeleton and his joints. It is erected upon various elements which sum up his ties to the ancestors and the supernatural powers, indicating his responsibility and contributing to the maintenance of his strength. It is situated in such a way that all the events in the courtyard take place around it. and that nothing which is said is out of earshot. As a center of the family household, as the symbol of the industrious and responsible man, it is the framework of the community which it upholds, just as the chief does through his physical endurance and moral firmness. The whole village "leans upon the chief's joint."

Each morning and evening, the ǰigi ba ǰigi and the ba ǰigi /137/ are greeted so that the chief may be strong, that his family may increase, that he may foster the ancestral beliefs. Offerings and [782] libations are made upon the seat and upon the body of the chief when his authority is questioned. In (b) tomato juice is being poured; in (a), representing the elbow or the knee, the water which has been used for ritual bathing of these same joints; at the foot, in (n), the fowls' throats are cut while the officiator, before pouring down the blood of the sacrifice, blows into a small hole dug in the ground; finally, in (l) the water which was used to wash the chief's whole body is poured in.

[826] In this way the chief's joints, which are the seat of his strength and his procreative seed, are purified and fortified.

II. Village Cults

794 The village, as a physical entity, and its inhabitants are placed under the protection of the supernatural powers and of the ancestors. Faro is directly invoked at all water spots.

If the village is situated at the river's edge, the rituals are addressed to the Faro tyin. If it is not too far from the bank, the inhabitants go out to make their offerings to the spirit. Frequently, the stream, pond, or natural well, which often determined the site chosen by the founders, is though to be inhabited by an incarnation of Faro whose name is revered and to whom all offer a cult.

On the other hand, each village is placed under the protection of the dasiri, a special spirit delegated by Faro.

The ancestors are worshipped in various places: at the doors and thresholds of houses, at the cemetery, and at stone altars placed at the intersections of lanes and in public squares. These positive cults, which are aimed at the acquisition of beneficial forces, have as a counterpart, cults in which the villagers rid themselves of all their unlucky and infectious elements; these take place, in particular, at the crossroads, dangu, which are placed under the guardianship of the earth Soba spirits.

It would be impossible to treat all of the cults of the Bambara villages. Among these, three have caught our attention; they concern the dasiri, the dangu, and the ancestral altar stones.

A. The dasiri

The word dasiri (literally, which binds the mouth) designates the invisible spirit, Faro's representative entrusted with watching over /138/ the village, as well as the seat of this spirit and, sometimes too, the animal which accompanies it or symbolizes it.

The spirit haunts a rock, a thicket, or a tree situated near the village; the approaches to this spot are reserved for the elder in charge of the ritual (1).

1. In Massala and Soroba it is a baobab tree; in Sama, a tamarind tree, etc. See the observations on the dasiri collected by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné /Monograph of Djenne/, pp. 137-138; L. Tauxier. La Religion Bambara, pp. 195-208.

Generally the place is pointed out by the geomancer at the time the village is founded, or else determined by an event which occurred at that time. It is after this operation that the buildings are erected to the west of the chosen spot.

If the dasiri is a tree, no one may burn or cut its branches. In many cases it cannot be approached by anyone dressed in black or indigo, colors which represent obscurity. No Peul may sit in its shade (2). Any infraction of these taboos brings about the death of

2. The reasons for the taboo concerning the Peul have not yet been ascertained.

794 776 778 [563]

In some villages, the sacrificer never consumes butter or milk, foods which the Peul furnish the Bambara.

the culprit and deprives the villagers of their protector.

794 776 825

The spirit of the dasiri sometimes has as its compansion an animal which seems to represent the group's ancestor. At Ségou, it is a crocodile; at Ouélenguena, a she-ass; at Koulikoro, a monkey; in other places it is a male goat which is replaced when it dies. At Konodimini there are a series of deep intercommunicating wells which would have served as homes for the ancestors. These holes are at present occupied by hyenas which are considered to be incarnations of the blacksmiths of former times and which are the dasiri of the place.

The dasiri's animal is free to enter homes and to eat what it finds. It is often fed by the inhabitants. No one may attack it and whoever breaks this taboo, set on by a vengeful nyama of which he cannot [582 626] rid himself, risks being forbidden to marry, even being no longer tolerated in his native village (1).

1. This was, at Soroba, the case of Dji Diara, who, after killing a hyena, could not marry as no woman was willing to link her destiny to his.

794 776 782

As its name indicates, the function of the dasiri is to maintain the stability and integrity of the village. It is the "support of the inhabitants' lives"; the numerous rituals (individual or collective), of which it is the object, reveal the importance of its role as well as the diversity of the beings invoked. To Faro are addressed prayers for rain; to the ancestors prayers for questions /139/ concerning the family; and to the spirit of the tree when it is a matter of stopping an epidemic. But directly or indirectly, any sacrifice offered to the dasiri is offered to Faro. The victims (sheep or fowl) and the offerings (cotton bands, kola nuts) are always white (see Pl. 3, b).

794 778 852

When children reach the age of six or seven, they are led to the tree; they sit on its roots upon which kola nut juice is spat, and are, by this fact, introduced into the village cult. They are then presented to all the allies senanku and especially to the blacksmiths with whom they proceed to joke.

794 Each year a sacrifice bringing together all the inhabitants is offered
776 to the dasiri and is terminated by communal eating of the sacrificial
782 victim. The first fruits of the harvest are also brought to it by the sacrificer.

B. The dangu

776 The crossroads dangu or danku (literally, boundary of the head) are
778 inhabited by the Soba spirits who, under Faro, constantly intervene
823 in human affairs. Everything placed at this spot belongs to them,
783 and no one passes by without leaving an offering or a token of his presence: a tool, raw cotton, seeds, cloth. A travelling stranger kneels and deposits a little ash or some cotton; if not, he cleans off a little space on which he spits before leaving. A child passing by will greet it with these words: "Crossroads, my soul is in your hands." On the occasion of any event concerning the individual, the family, or the community, red kola nuts are placed at the crossroads and the following words uttered: "You, crossroads, I entrust my head to you; you are my support; I say, you, crossroads" (1).

1. E dangu m be ni ku kalifa, do i la ni jigi be fe, ngo e dangu.

The corssroad, as an ideal public thoroughfare, is the chosen spot where one easily rids oneself of the nyama which any individual keeps and carries about with him. All that is impure, unlucky, and undesirable for the individual or the community is left at the crossroads. Objects which have belonged to dead people are also left there. The forces which are thus gotten rid of are supposedly absorbed by the spirits for whom they constitute a kind of nourishment which will then be returned to men in the form of gifts free of any taint. (2)

2. See p. 258.

/140/ Several examples will illustrate the role played by the crossroads in the community:

Any man who has wounded an animal or squashed an insect is affected in his own tere by that of the victim. He goes to the crossroads, kneels, and prays, depositing at the same time a band of cotton, an egg, and ashes. The band of woven cotton, symbol of

776 778 823 783 the word, is offered as clothing, and the eggs are offered as purification. As for the ashes, it is the ideal pure element since fire has "removed" its tere from the wood; here it represents the man from whom "the bad force acting on his tere has been removed" (1). Whoever murders an

1. See pp. 90 ff.

animal proceeds in the samw way with the animal's hide upon which he throws cowrie shells. In both cases, the spirits absorb the tere and nyama, which add to their own forces and free the culprit.

Collective purifications are carried out on the dangu when sexual taboos regarding cultivated fields and bush are broken. The impurity [833] resulting from copulation performed outdoors is communicated to all the land belonging to the village; the trees in the bush will no longer bear fruit; the harvests will deteriorate. Formerly the two lovers [684] taken by surprise were deprived of their clothing which was burned on the dangu after they had circled the village three times starting at the left. The culprits were then banished. At present, if the plight of the fields suggests that such an act has been committed, all varieties of cultivated seeds are gathered in a basket which is placed at the cross-roads. Then, all the villagers and their domestic animals circle the village three times while sham battles take place between men mounted on horseback. After a sacrifice offered at the dangu, the seeds, thus purified, are sown.

776 778 823 241 Offerings are made to the spirits of the crossroads at the time of sowing to invoke their protection. This ritual is obligatory for whomever sows cotton, since this seed was given to men by these spirits. The farmer places the seeds, sits down facing west, and cries out three times the name of the dangu above the seeds. He leaves three small piles in homage to the spirit along with fibers from the plant, and kills a victim before proceeding to sow his field. When the stalks are up, he cuts some boughs and returns to the place of sacrifice to sweep up the seeds, thus impregnating them with the nyama of the dangu. He then dries them, grinds, sifts, and mixes them with earth picked up on the same spot. In his field, he shouts /141/ the name of the dangu and throws the mixture with all his strength in the direction of the cardinal points, the zenith, and the ground. When the plants are mature he picks the first seven ripe seeds, brings them to the same place, and offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

It is also at the crossroads that the elders place the child whose legitimacy is in doubt. If the diviner who is then consulted declares that the child is a bastard, he is deprived of the protection of the spirits and is supposedly unable to survive the nyama which he has acquired at the place. In this same spot are buried abnormal children, in particular hydrocephalics who are considered undesirable. The spindle of a dead woman is placed here along with the broom she habitually used.

But the ritual most characteristic of the crossroads is the one resorted to by the village when it is in trouble: the primitive wooden mallet, gosilande is planted in the ground; it is then struck with a stalk of millet to chase away evil and to induce new techniques of reparation to come out of the instrument (1).

1. See p. 145.

C. Stone Altars

In the villages, at the intersections of lanes, and in the squares, the founding ancestors are represented by stones under which various objects are buried (see Pl. V, b).

At Sama, four large stones, encased in a clay platform, symbolize both the cardinal points and the ancestors. They are in touch with the dasiri and receive the same offerings. At Banankoroni, the fara ba is partly buried. Under its point is an albino skull which represents those of the first ancestors and their bones. Two hoes, one placed near the right ear and the other near the left ear, convey the idea that "the man who cultivates the earth will never hear a humiliating word." Under the chin, another hoe recalls that the villagers who are faithful to agriculture will never know famine. Under the hoe, a siriku (2) protects them against those who try to harm them, and brings them

2. See p. 179, n. 1.

"the hyena's luck"; it also means that some of their ancestors were transformed into hyenas in former times. A circumcision knife recalls that all males are circumcised, and all women excised (Fig. 15). Finally, three albino bones and a small pile of copper are a testimony to /142/ Faro's presence and power. Drawings are made on these

stones at the time of the collective ceremonies called the years "renewal" (1).

1. See pp. ff.

III. The Religious Societies

Members of groups formed by families in a broad sense, headed by patriarchs and owning lands which cannot be divided, also belong to other collective groups called fɔ̀; these are formed by the age grade of circumcision, excision, or initiation, and grouped around altars which are their own and which possess their special rituals.

These societies are called by the general term dyo (2) meaning

2. It is appropriate to distinguish the religious societies, dyo, described in this work, from the mutual aid societies, tɔ̀, of apparently secular character. The latter are also very numerous and exist in all the Bambara villages.

These organizations are strongly hierarchical and are placed under the direction of responsible chiefs. Their members perform communal work which concerns the life of the village: felling trees, clearing, cultivation of individual or communal fields, house construction, etc., and participation in marriage ceremonies. The detailed study of the tɔ̀ whose role is considerable would be indispensable to an understanding of the social and economic organization of this tribe.

The participation of the tɔ̀ in agricultural work will be described by Mme. de Ganay in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture (in press).

"to build, to edify" and also "secret." This term recalls that each individual constitutes an element of the whole group formed by the society.

794 For male members, the large dyo, the principal aim of which is the preservation of spiritual forces and the maintenance of the person in daily life, are the Komo, the Kworè, the Nama, the Kono, the Nago, and the Nya. Women are grouped around muso dyo, about which little information has been obtained. The uncircumcised belong to the ndomo (or ceble). In addition, members of these societies are divided into groups which may be independent of age grades and which are designated by signs.

The Komo

The word Komo indicates the complex theoretically made up in each village of society members, living and dead, the sanctuary and its altars (boli), the responsible chief, and the mask. It is dominated
[776] and protected by the invisible power of Faro and by the presence of a particular spirit to which it is consecrated. The latter haunts a tree located in the thicket where the ceremonies take place. He is /143/ respected for having taught in ancient times the origin and role of the boli and the variations of the cult; he comes to slake his thirst on the blood of victims.

The Komo is as powerful as it is old. The terms trodeni (ni, small) and tro ba (ba, big) are given to it, depending upon how ancient it is.

Each Komo has, in addition, a particular name (1). The Komo

1. According to native etymology, komo means "taking (mo) of the pond (ko)." According to L. Tauxier, "Komo in Bambara means bad, mean, difficult" (see the Dictionnaire bambara-français of Mgr. Bazin, p. 308). On the root Ko or Kon see M. Delafosse, "Terminologie religieuse au Soudan /Religious Terminology in the Sudan/" l'Anthropologie, December, 1923, quoted by L. Tauxier. Some observations concerning the composition and functioning of the Komo society have been the object of a chapter of L. Tauxier in the Religion Bambara, pp. 272-310, which quotes works published by Ch. Monteil and the Abbe Henry. See also: Moussa Travélé, "Le Komo ou Koma /The Komo

794 or Koma/," Outremer, 1929; H. Labouret, Les Manding et leur langue.

794 The Komo
561 society, komo tyew (literally, men, people of the Komo) is composed of all circumcised men, with the exception of the griot who may under no condition become members, after an initiation performed according to the age grade, the members of which are called tonyaw. The hierarchy is rigorously respected: an earlier age grade will always be ahead of the one that follows it in all circumstances of secular or religious life. The Komo recognizes a chief, komotigi (literally, master or owner of the Komo) who preferably belongs to the caste of blacksmiths and whose function is hereditary. The son automatically assumes command of the age grade which follows that of his father. Upon the latter's death, he changes his age grade and becomes the head of his father's. In the case where the owner of the Komo dies
[304] young and his eldest son, who is to inherit the office, is not yet circumcised, he is made to undergo the operation in the night following the death, and on the following day is proclaimed chief (1).

1. In La Religion Bambara, L. Tauxier points out that in some villages the chief of the Komo exercises his power only during a seven-year term. At the end of seven years an election takes place and the function is not hereditary.

794 Because of the importance of his functions, the chief of the Komo
784 is made to respect a great number of taboos. In particular he may not penetrate into the sanctuary if he has not been chaste during the past twenty-four hours. If the taboo is broken, he must warn the men of his age grade and sacrifice two roosters upon the altars to purify himself. His wife is initiated (for she is apt to see certain ritual
[562] objects generally hidden from women because of her intimacy with the chief), but she is not present at any of the ceremonies to which only the members are /144/ admitted. If she commits adultery she
[837] brings about her husband's exclusion from the society, not only as chief but also as member.

794 The chief is often assisted by two elders belonging to his age grade,
561 whose advice he seeks in all cases concerning the community. In addition, he is always helped by young initiates. If one of these

794 distinguishes himself through diligence, obedience, and skill, he may
561 occasionally, if the elders so decide, be promoted to a more advanced age grade than his own and thus find himself on an equal footing with his elders.

794 The responsibilities of the Komo chief are considerable. He is the guardian of the altars which, as we shall later see, contain all the spiritual forces of the society; he is the only one able to manipulate them and is in charge of all the rituals which depend upon them. He
[426] manages the patrimony of the group (seeds and money) which is kept in the cowrie or millet granaries, and which he may tap, in case of necessity, in order to make interest loans to members of the society who request them. (1)

1. See S. de Ganay, "Un jardin d'essai et son autel chez les Bambara /A Sample Garden and its Altar among the Bambara/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 57-63.

But this function, honorary and advantageous from many points of view, involves not only rights but, more important, duties from which the chief cannot be exemated. He must, under no circumstances, abuse his power; he can make no decision without the agreement of the members and may not act, even in the most insignificant case, without advising each and every one of them. Each person is kept up to date as regarding the smallest details concerning the general activity of the Komo and the entire age grade must be informed at the same moment. To break these rules would mean to become exposed to the greatest dangers. Just like the head of the total family whose power is far from being absolute (2), the responsible person

794 614 2. "The Mandingo fa," says Henri Labouret, in Les Manding et leur langue, "appears less free in his acts and decisions than the master of the ancient taisible fraternity. Far from being the tyrannical and strong willed autocrat whom people have frequently taken pleasure in describing, he seems to me, rather, to fulfill therole of a delegated administrator,

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an enforcement agent, expected to conform to the directives decided upon by the domestic council composed of elders and family heads (pp. 54 and 55). The aim pursued by the chief is to administer wisely a patrimony which will always remain undivided" (p. 57).

794 must exercise his office with strictness, honesty, and thoughtfulness.

A. Creation and Consecration of the Komo

The few villages not possessing a Komo are linked to the Komo in a neighboring village. If a village decides to create /145/ an independent society, it delegates its elders to an important Komo (tro ba) whose chief, after the performance of divinatory rites, makes them swear submission to the altars which he will entrust to them after consecrating them; they promise never to drop the cult, never to omit a sacrifice or offering. After the sacs brought by the petitioners have been filled with necessary products (honey, pepper, charcoal, gold, copper, etc.), they are overflowed with the blood of victims provided by those about to take office and then rubbed on the altars of the tro. The new Komo becomes the trodeni of the one from which it thus receives part of its power. In the course of the night following the consecration and the daytime transfer of the boli (1),

1. The boli, as indicated on p. 130, are linked to a category including day and sun.

a member of the society brings to his village a pembele similarly consecrated by the donors. This shift at night recalls the period of Pemba's reign preceding the apparition of light and the regular succession of days and nights.

Once back in the village, the society, gathered around the chief, organizes its ritual, chooses its officers, obtains the necessary masks, builds the sanctuary, and places on it the altars upon which blood sacrifices will be performed daily during this first period.

794 778 B. Altars of the Komo

The boli altars occupy a distinguished place in the religious and mythological representations of the society organized around them. On the one hand they are a capsule of the universe because of their composition; on the other they are a capsule of the society as all its members are present in them. In fact, each member has provided a part of the composing elements after having impregnated them with his person by salivating over them while pronouncing his name.

794 778 346 The altars of the Komo are kept in a sanctuary, the komo so (literally, house of the Komo), a medium sized hut built either in the chief's dwelling place, or in the bush at some distance from the village. The approach to this structure which is under Faro's protection is forbidden to the ordinary person. The chief himself never enters alone. It is said that a snake, the soul and guardian of the sanctuary, is born and lives at the top of the hut in the branches which form the roof (Pl. VI, a).

The hut is divided into a number of floors on each of which is placed /146/ an altar. The highest one contains at its center the nimara boli (literally, altar of the souls) which, as its name indicates, is the container of the souls belonging to deceased members of the society and to sacrificed animals (1). It contains, from top to bottom,

[774 782] 1. There is constant preoccupation with preserving all vital elements. The souls of sacrificed animals are the object of the same care as those of humans. Like them, they participate in the resurrection promised to everything which has lived.

hair of the dead, copper for the souls of animals, gold for those of men. These various ingredients, placed in a double sac, receive the sacrificial blood which runs between the two layers and soaks them.

794 778 The nimara boli is surrounded by small individual altars which have served to channel the souls of the dying and lead them to the common receptacle (2). These small boli remain in the hut only

2. See p. 175.

194 during the seven days following the death and are returned to the heir
178 of the deceased (son or brother); they remain permanently in the sanctuary only if the dead man has no descendants. They are held up by two wooden stakes called čin ta bere (literally, sticks which collect inheritance) which keep the souls of the dead and which contain at the top wood dust from Makanta Djigui's canoe and gold at the bottom. These stakes feed the boli which they hold and the souls of the dead which they contain, thus demonstrating that the "Komo never abandons anyone and that men without descendants remain with it for ever."

[194] The taboos concerning the nimara boli are numerous and strict: it may not be removed from the sanctuary except for funerals (1). No

1. See p. 247.

woman must ever see it. No foreign cult could ever conceivably be celebrated in its presence.

On the second floor is located the ñõ boli (literally, altar of millet) which contains an invigorating power intended for the society's crops. It is composed of a sac divided into six pockets which contain (from top to bottom) at the left: small millet, fonio, and copper; at the right: large millet, rice and other cereals, and gold. The sac, which opens at the top, receives at the time of agricultural ceremonies (sowing and harvest) the blood of victims offered by members of the millet society, ñõtõ. It must always remain damp with sacrificial blood so that the seeds which it contains will always live.

The ñõ boli is also tied to two stakes called ñõ boli kane (literally, protection of the ñõ boli) which contain in a hollowed-out /147/ section some millet and gold; it is tied to the stakes by threads which bring it the forces they contain.

The ñõ boli watches over the growth of cereals: germination, formation of the ears, maturation. It is responsible for the "head of millet" (2).

2. Each farmer is the owner of an individual ñõ boli which is placed in a subordinate position under that of the Komo. In addition, the Komo's ñõ boli is in close touch with the ñõ boli of the Kworè, a society whose purpose is to obtain

794 778 the rain necessary for cultivation (see p. 217). The agricultural role of the Komo will be described by S. de Ganay in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture.

794 778 784 The main taboo of the nõ̃ boli is the loss or waste of food. If even a grain of cereal drops to the ground, or into the fire, the members of the millet society are responsible for picking it up and eating it; otherwise the Komo will punish for the failure to do so and the harvest suffers.

794 778 726 The third floor contains the nyama boli, a repository of the forces (nyama) of individuals who have died a violent death (murder, war, execution). The nyama boli used to contain in former times a stone called gõ̃goro kurube, considered to be the "mother" of the stones thrown by the warriors' sling. It was removed from the sac in case of war and carried to the battlefield by a twin walking at the head of the troops. On its surface were engraved a series of lines representing the king, the warriors, and their wives. It gathered all the souls of those dead in combat and received their blood as an offering.

794 778 The nyama boli is, moreover, responsible for the soul of the crops and a repository for the souls of sacrificed animals; it also receives the "nyama of the words" of the members. It shares with the nõ̃ boli the responsibility for the cultivations and confers in this way great power to the society.

The sac contains in its lower part a mixture of coagulated blood and gold, and in its upper part a mixture of charcoal powder, pepper, and honey, which gives power to the nyama with which the sac is loaded. The taboo of the nyama boli is the rapid death of victims [782] which are sacrificed to it; only slow death confers effective nyama.

Upon the ground of the sanctuary, along with the dance costume of the mask, nya, are placed small altars intended either for sale, or for the creation of the new Komo, or for individual purposes. Animal horns, both byẽ̃ ba (literally, big horn) and byẽ̃ ni (literally, little horn), are also placed there; they contain powder for ritual usage, korti, whose dangerous action takes place during the times the mask is taken out (1).

1. The various mixtures used for the religious practices of the Bambara

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often contain ingredients which have been pulverized: wood dust, charcoal powder, even powder of precious metals. Our investigation has not yet allowed us to clarify the role of this pulverization process. However, its mention by the Bambara and the frequent use of korti indicate the importance attached to this type of preparation.

/148/ Outside the hut, at the height of the nyama boli, a hook holds up the clothes of those who are killed by the Komo. The sanctuary, as well as the clothing of the mask, is daubed with black earth taken on the shore of the river representing Faro, and covered with feathers of the same color. Generally speaking, the metal [823] contained in the Komo altars gives it its strength and life. The most powerful of these is gold, silver comes next, then copper. Since each person gives an offering according to his means, the power of the altar thus depends in a certain measure on the wealth of the members of the society.

[782] Regular sacrifices upon the stakes, the bases of which sometimes contain a little wood from the historic canoe of Makanta Djigui, permit them to "maintain the pressure, the life" in the various altars.

These altars are removed from the sanctuary only upon the occasion of funerals or agricultural rites. When the mask is removed and when there are dances, replicas commonly found in the home of the chief are sometimes used instead.

The pembele is the protector of the society, the container of the forces (nyama) of the group. It is rarely placed in the sanctuary and usually kept by the chief who never exhibits it; occasionally it is watered with rain water symbolizing the work of creation.

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Before the annual ceremony called "anniversary of the Komo," drawings are made on the sanctuary by the chief or an elder; they are a reminder that the sanctuary is the link between the invisible powers and the members of the society. Besides the image of creation as an issue of the initial vibration (see Fig. 2), the head of the ancestor Koumabana, figurations of the twins, and the twenty-two fundamental signs are sometimes drawn. Finally hoes emphasize the agricultural function of the Komo (1). Granaries intended for conserving grains

1. At the time when the attention of specialists is attracted by the division of

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religious and social powers in ancient societies, it is interesting to point out that the Komo altars represent a very definite three-way division: the first is used for the conservation of spiritual forces (souls) of the group; the second presides exclusively over agricultural rites; the third is concerned with keeping the spiritual principles of individuals who died violently and of crop seeds; it played an important role during the wars. This threefold division is comparable on many points to that observed by M. Dumezil in Indo-European societies.

from the first crops /149/ used as offerings, are placed next to the sanctuaries or in the home of the chief (1).

1. In the village of Soroba the sanctuary includes seven granaries: three for small millet, sanŋ; four for large millet, keninge. Seven is the number symbolic of the person, three for masculinity (small millet is male) and four for femininity (large millet is female).

C. The Mask

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The man who wears the mask during the ceremonies personifies the Komo. The head is sculptured in the shape of a human face or animal face. At Konodimini, it represents the panther; at Soungoba, a stork; at Banankoroni, an eagle; at Banoumbougoula, an elephant; at Ségoubougou, a vulture. The mask is usually decorated with elements borrowed from several animals. Thus, at Soroba, the skull and horns are those of a buffalo, but the jaw is that of a crocodile. It is, moreover, ornamented with the feathers of a wild duck (2).

2. An informant, who attended Komo ceremonies in a great number of villages, asserted he had never seen the same mask twice.

794 The head of the mask is usually made of bone (a human or hyena
532 skull), or of wood painted white, black, and red. The mask, per se, is made in such a way as to frighten the future initiates. Just as the soul of a dead person, which requests offerings or threatens to drag his kin with it, is feared, so too is this fact which is in contact with the altar of souls (nimara boli) and which reflects the face of the ancestors. It also represents Faro: the mask is sometimes provided with a long beard symbolic of his hair, and lightly plastered with a layer of black earth taken from the river bank and impregnated with his power; it is sometimes smeared with the blood of a young girl who has died in the course of the ceremonies, in commemoration of the virgins annually offered to Faro in olden times.

Copper arrows (kun bye) are inserted into the skull and charms (kun kanana) are attached to them with the purpose of attacking the undesirables (noninitiates, women, or children) who approach the dance site.

"The eyes of the mask are large, so that the Komo may see and unveil everything; the nostrils are well opened for he must sniff everything, smell the good and bad of things. The mouth is twisted for the Komo does not talk; he only whistles and sings. The ears are vast so that he may hear everything, even that /150/ which each one says secretly in his heart. The chin of the mask is square, a sign of purity, decision, and clairvoyance." During the ceremonies, he silently opens his mouth. It is said that due to the presence of the altar of souls, nimara boli, "happiness penetrates him" (1). By sing-

1. Here dun, literally, penetration of happiness.

ing, he redistributes this felicity to the audience and this is why he repeats the verses.

794 As a rule, women, griot and noninitiates are taboo to the mask.
532 To each of the elements composing it also belongs a particular taboo.
784 Thus, the head of the mask must never touch menstrual blood. Any
841 infraction would bring about "a visible change to the face" and the altars contained in the sac carried by the dancer would be without strength. For this reason, no member must participate in the ceremonies if his wife is in a menstrual period.

794 The costume worn by the dancer is held up by a sort of carcass
292 (bry) made of ngolobe (1) wood used because of its flexibility, and is

1. Combretum micranthum.

enveloped with a light blanket for protection. Inside the bry are suspended various flutes (komo fle) which are blackened by the blood of sacrifices offered to "improve their sound" and which will be used in the course of the ceremonies. Along with these flutes is a little bag filled with spare spider webs. Any individual who goes under the
[834] bry to dance must abstain from sexual relations for a specified period of time prior to the ceremony.

The costume (nya) which covers the carcass is made with the clothing of individuals killed by the Komo (2). Contrary to the bry, which

2. When a guilty member or a noninitiate is "killed" by the Komo, his clothing is offered to it.

has no active role but serves only to isolate the dancer inside the mask, the religious role of the costume is very important. It represents the "body and the valor of the ancestors." It is not the object of blood sacrifices, but is covered by a powder made of the bones of individuals killed by the Komo to which has been added kola nut juice. The
794 cloth is dyed with black earth taken from the river bank in exchange
292 for a small offering of copper, gold, or cereals. Drawings called
532 komo mani (literally, little people of the Komo) are made on the cloth to represent Faro on the one hand, recognizable by his long black hair, and on the other the eight ancestors who received the word. All the first agricultural implements of the Bambara are drawn with red ochre. The feathers of black, white, and red egrets are then sewn on the nya to hide /151/ the black earth, which is the spirit's abode. Two days before everything is taken out, these feathers are the object of offerings of kola nut juice, millet mash, and the blood of fowls.

794 The costume, like the head of the mask, must be seen neither
292 by women nor by noninitiates. "Its color would change and it would
784 become dull, making a purification necessary."

794 The body of the mask has two arms into which the dancer introduces his own. The arms terminate in a hook, koli (3), which is
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794 532 3. Koli means nail or spur in reference to a rooster and, by extension, hook.

impregnated with black earth from the river and made of copper, Faro's metal, soaked in the venom of a viper before the hook was formed. These hooks are also annually soaked in red venom mixed with pepper. All these preparations make them dangerous weapons used for different purposes during the ceremonies.

The right hook (kinin koli) is used to kill the guilty ones or the undesirables. A slight would brings about death which is then attributed to Faro. The left hook defends members of the society against the dangers which are present, even for them, in the actions and emanations of the right hook. It contains two shards of black pottery, Faro's taboo, which keep away and thus diminish the latter's power. During the dance the Komo, wishing to protect one of the members under its jurisdiction, waves the left arm over him to attenuate the strength of the right. During funerals a gesture of the left hook will indicate the deceased's membership in the society and will assure him protection in the hereafter.

[784 823] The taboo of the copper hooks is the same as Faro's concerning this metal. Just as no one would cross the Niger wearing an object or an ornament of copper, similarly no one would wear copper in attending the Komo ceremonies.

The wearing of the mask, which is much sought after by several initiates at each ceremony, is assigned to one of them by the chief. This role involves risks which are diminished by certain precautions such as abstention from sexual relations before the ceremony. On the day of the ceremony, the elders make the wearer drink millet beer until he is completely inebriated; then for a moment they apply to his chin and abdomen the nyama boli which he will carry in a bag during the ceremony. He also puts on a ritual headdress which sometimes has incorporated in it a particle of the one belonging to the famous Soma Moriba Sidibé. The mask is then adjusted on his head, the flute slipped between his teeth, while the chief assures him of his good faith and proves to him that he runs no danger.

/152/ D. Musical Instruments

794 534 The emergence of the Komo is accompanied by rhythms played on drums, dyiri kolo (literally, bone, wood), made of hides stretched

794 534 on half-gourds, and accompanied by flutes and bells. The musicians, recruited from among the musical members of the society, are obliged to submit to certain precautions because of the proximity of the mask during the performance of the dances. In fact, if the mask casts a spell (korti), they may, unwittingly, breathe in the dangerous powder and it is wise to protect oneself by taking the antidote ahead of time.

794 534 The Komo's iron bell, kolokolo or grinda, is kept with certain altars in the chief's residence; it is rung by a special bearer, grindavo or nadara koloyo.

713 539 A myth recalls the origin of this bell. "A small child, who went to play at the crossroads situated at the approaches to the village, heard one day a bell ring and invisible beings speak. Seized with fear, he returned home. When he was questioned by his parents, he refused to answer but with his finger pointed out to them the road which he took every day. The parents followed it and arrived at the crossroads where they found a copper bell. The spirit of the place, Soba, announced to them that he was making a gift of it so that they might call the spirits by ringing it and that the spirits would answer them (1). But he asked the father to give him in exchange the child

1. In olden times, "men spoke with their ancestors and with their gods."

who habitually came to the crossroads so that the child could continue to play with the spirit's children. When the father, in despair, told him he had not the courage to part with his son, the spirit advised him to consult Faro.

The man gathered the young girls of the village together and asked them to intercede for him with the spirit. Dressed in their most beautiful clothes and wearing their ornaments, they went off singing and threw cakes and couscous into the river (2). The elders

[796] 2. Each year the offering and the race are repeated by the young girls of Ségou who go to the river singing the nyari nyari to.

went down in turn and received Faro's consent. He demanded that

794 they keep the instrument for religious ceremonies. After declaring
534 that they would obey, the elders returned to the crossroads where
773 the Soba spirit gave them the bell and left in exchange the child whom
539 the spirit had called to him in their absence.

The object was then taken to the blacksmith who made one in the same shape, using wood or bone for the body, and stone for the clapper. After the invention of iron, they were forged according to the ancient model with the addition of small copper bells."

794 /153/ To ring the bell is "to make Faro hear the sound of copper,"
534 to call him, and flatter him at the same time. When the mask is brought out, the sound warns the noninitiates to avoid the procession. The flute or reed pipe of the Komo, wara da, "mouth of the one armed with claws," is made of a bamboo stem pierced by three holes. The middle one is open and the two others are obstructed by a cobweb. The instrument is held between the bearer's teeth and is tied by a string to the back of his neck or to his ears.

794 A myth tells the origin of Faro's flute, made according to the
534 same principle, but of a different shape.

773 A woman, called Koussouba Koulibali, was bathing one morning
539 when she saw Faro and the dodo fish sitting at the river bank. The fish was playing the flute and singing:

"I will whistle, I will whistle in my Faro's flute; he who will not hear me will die, he who will die will regret it" (1).

1. Na fye, na fye ne nka faro fle flye,
nyimi mame o na sa, nyimi sara o bone na.

The woman fled and told her husband, who was a diviner and chief of the Komo, about what had happened. The latter proceeded to the banks of the Niger and frightened away the fish who abandoned its instrument. The man seized it and went home, followed by the turbulent river water from which he managed to escape in his canoe. But his whole family perished in the flood.

In the morning, the man returned to the river bank and cried as he played the flute. He played for such a long time that Faro, taking pity on him, came out and said: "I have drowned the members of your family and flooded the village. I forgive you, however,

794 534 773 539 because of the offerings made by other men. Keep the flute and since you are Soma and chief of the Komo, let all the Komo flutes be blessed because of this one." By this he meant that the Komo flute, like the other ritual objects, would hereafter contain his strength, nyama. He added that, when men wished to call him or to talk to him, they would have to do it through the intermediary of this instrument.

794 534 Before each occasion when the mask is brought out, a sacrifice is performed upon the flutes "to improve their sound." Faro's flute is used in the rituals performed at the river bank, to pray to him or to thank him. To play the flute is equivalent to reciting his device; he is forced to hear. The Komo flute is used only during the masked ceremonies; it makes those who hear it say that the Komo is "a thing with a soft throat" (1).

1. Fẽ kã duma.

In former times the chief alone was allowed to play the flute, whatever its type; death was sanctioned for infraction of this rule. Ordinary flutes /154/ of a style different from those belonging to the cult are used by children.

E. Initiation to the Komo

794 852 Three days after the birth of a boy, his father presents him with the elements which he has contributed to the making of the Komo boli and recites the komo kumã: "You, Komo boli, these things are inside; society of the Komo, these things are inside; customs of the Komo, these things are inside; you are a child, you are going to approach the age of the elders; Komo boli, here is my child, watch over him" (2).

2. Komo boli la, nin waliw ba kono; komo dyẽ la, nin fẽw ba la; komo sira la, nin kunko ba kono; i ye demisẽ ye i bi ta makorobaya ye; komo boli nde fle, tye do, i dyã to a la.

He then returns the child to its mother with these words: "The son has been introduced to the secret of masculinity; he has received

794 the Komo's blessings, the Komo's blessing is with him; let him join
852 the men, let his light be with us" (1). The child is then presented in

1. De dyira la tyę gundo la; ani komo ye
dukaw mine nuofe, komo ka barka bi a fe;
ka fara tyew ka, ka yele kę an ta ye.

the same way to its grandmother.

These acts anticipate the initiation which later will make the new-
794 born an adolescent member of the Komo society.

794 In each village this society is composed of all initiated men, di-
561 vided into age grades, which are themselves composed, theoretically,
[564] of the men circumcised in the same year. Only the griot are not admitted. It is permissible for an individual who has not been initiated immediately after his circumcision to be admitted later if the society agrees. He will belong, regardless of his age, to the age grade with which he will have been initiated.

One age grade has precedence over the other which follows. This hierarchical order is followed strictly in daily life as well as during councils and ceremonies. To break these rules of seniority would mean to disturb the order even in the hereafter, since the Komo gathers together the sum total of both living and dead members.

794 The recruitment of members varies from one region to another because of the expenses involved in the admission ceremony and in
[735] participation in the ritual. Some villagers refrain from joining because of poverty, and it also happens that some conversions to Islam are brought about by this fact.

/155/ The initiation is performed at night. The kotigi (2) presents

2. See p. 156.

to the future members, one by one, the ancestors' tools. He explains to them their origin, their history, their role, and their spiritual value. He teaches them the respect they owe the ancestors for their courage, their labors, and the technological inventions of which they were either initiators or guardians. The mask is removed from its shelter and dressed by a member; in front of the children the man who wears it unmasks himself and reveals to them the meaning of the different parts of the costume.

794 The candidates next swear an oath the text of which is recited by the chief:

"If I reveal (the secrets of) the boli, may it kill me; if I disclose the institutions, may they kill me; until my death, if I speak, may my father die, may my mother die, may the boli break my heart" (1).

1. Ni nye korobo, boli ka fa, ni nye korobo, dyow ka fa, fo kata n sa ni nya fo n fa ka sa m ba ka sa, boli dyugu ka sõ ta.

Each in his turn, the children next lick the head and the hooks of the mask three times, thus assuring it their allegiance: "Until my death, I shall not reveal the koli. Faro has not been revealed! Let the koli not be revealed!" (1)

1. Fo ka ta n sa nte korobo koli, faro ma korobo, koli kana korobo.

After the altars, including the pembele, have been presented to [782] them, the postulants drink the blood of a goat offered in sacrifice; thus they assimilate the forces of the Komo and by this communion consecrate their oath.

Finally, the mechanism of the society in all its details is explained to them: the necessity of hierarchy in age grades, of respect for taboos, and of the secrecy in which all that concerns the organization must be held. A moral lesson is also taught them; in particular they [867] are advised to set themselves a line of conduct in private life as well as in public life, to be righteous, to avoid duplicity and bad faith, flãvlãña (literally, double action), never to serve two masters, and not to entertain conflicting desires among themselves.

794 As an illustration, the adventures of the first members who broke these laws are told.
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539 One of Makanta Djigui's companions, Garou Keita, was afflicted with this serious fault. He had become friendly with Moridje Sidibé, son of the famous Soma Moriba Sidibé, who had the same character. At this period three great Komo were already functioning in the region: that of Koulikouro called selo (literally, grave); that of Nyamina called dyibi (literally, dark); and that of Kankan.

Garou went to one of the ceremonies of the Komo of Kankan /156/ and by telling lies, incited the members to revolt against the local

chiefs, which they did. They interrupted the dances and refused to recognize the Komo which was dissolved, leaving the chief alone. But Garou, who had lied, died shortly after that.

The chief of Kankan carried away the altars and put them under the protection of the Komo chief of Koulikoro, and the members participated in the ceremonies of this locality. Moridje went to Nyamina and, in the same way as Garou, incited the members to engage in a kind of rivalry with the Komo of Koulikoro. In the course of a ceremony celebrated in this latter village, he called forth the Komo of Nyamina, using the authority attached to his father's name, and offerred a male goat to both groups. The two chiefs refused, arguing with reason that one victim could not satisfy two Komo. Moridje paid no attention and brought the two maskers face to face with the goat between them. A fight took place with the animal as a pawn, each masker using his magical powers to win it, and the members gathered behind their respective masks shouting: "the goat is ours." Later, the mask wearer also died prematurely.

To avoid the possibility that members will give their allegiance to two Komo, they are made to lick the mask once again, while the following prayer is recited: "If you lick the mask, may you not make the fĩĩviãĩã, may you not perpetrate a betrayal" (1). If, after swear-

1. Nye komo kun no, i kana seka fĩĩviãĩã kẹ, nye komo kun no, i kana seka dyãĩfa kẹ.

ing this oath, the party betrays it, he becomes "a rotten person" (matolilo) and loses the esteem and confidence of his companions.

As the young men grow with years and increase in knowledge, the instruction they are given is increasingly comprehensive. The head of the Komo, accompanied by men of his age grade, takes the postulant into the bush and questions him about his intentions and aims. Before indicating to him the group to which he is to be attached and introducing its members to him, he teaches him by drawing on the ground the combination of signs representing the arrangement in the universe of the Komo society, a combination which is usually reproduced before each ceremony and which permits the participants to recognize their place (see Fig. 12).

This drawing, called wolo ti, "sign of the generation," is composed of two long lines cutting each other at right angles and oriented

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according to the cardinal points. The point of juncture is placed in the center of a square called bara kene, "rhythm of space," the internal angles of which are armed with hooks. The two crossed lines are /157/ the symbol of the multiplication and extension of beings and things in the universe which is represented by the central square. The four angle hooks express the creation rotating upon itself (1). It is therefore,

1. See p. 20. We have here a special representation of the swastika whose branches are turned toward the center.

a schematic representation of the order and movement of the universe.

Along the extension of the diagonal lines outside the central square are drawn five signs which are each the symbol of a category of initiates or of a ritual object; these signs also indicate the place of the participants during the ceremonies.

On the eastern and western branches are placed the signs of the older initiates:

1. dyɛ, "union." Sign of the Komo Society in its entirety, the body of its members.

2. doniya, "knowledge." The point of the angle is "the point of knowledge" and its opening "the collective voice of the society." We are dealing here with the science which the initiates possess.

3. bako, "link." This closed sign expresses the ties which bind the initiates one to another and to the Komo, as well as the group spirit of which they must give proof.

4. sɔ̃ni, "good will, consent." The point of departure of the stroke from the line indicates that the initiate is free to enter the society, to climb the steps of the successive grades indicated by the broken line, but not to leave it, and that he must have the will to follow the rules of the organization.

5. tyɛ̃, "truth." The members must be sincere. The two symmetrical hooks indicate that one must begin with truth and end with it.

6. tyɛ̃ ɲɛrɛ, "evidence of truth." This drawing, testimony to the preceding, is sometimes attributed to strangers who come to attend the ceremony and recognize the conventional signs (2).

2. See p. 211.

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7. bɛ̃ni so, "house of agreement." Evidence of the sign 1, it represents a sickle, symbol of the house and of the union of the members. In serious cases, to stop a quarrel or to settle a difference, the Komo chief presents an ancient sickle and says: "It is the proof of the agreement, it is the evidence of the union" (1).

1. Beni so yeta do, dye ɛ̌ere do.

8. ɲ̌igi so, "house of support." The dot symbolizes the komo so and the whole recalls the support which the chief offers the members. Orphans sit in the spot where this sign is drawn.

/158/ 9. so ba, "big house." The drawing represents "the egg of the world" and marks the spot where the oldest geomancer in the village stands alone.

10. komba, "big door." Sign and place of the person who performs the sacrifice, for the sacrifice "opens the doors" and puts man into contact with the invisible.

On the northern branch are placed the signs which concern the young initiates.

11. timidɛ̃, "circumcised." This refers to those circumcised in the next to the last age grade. The sign is that of the completed person (2).

2. See G. Dieterlen, "Les signes des Kéita du Mandé /Signs of the Kéita among the Mande/," l'Homme. Cahiers d'ethnologie, de géographie, de linguistique (in press).

12. timidɛ̃ kle, "circumcised of the last age grade." The drawing shows the incomplete person.

13. tyi dɛ̃, "son of work." These are the sons of the kworɛ duga (3). The sign, drawn inverse to that of the person, expresses the /159/

3. See p. 220.

necessary disturbances and the pleasantries brought by these dignitaries to the Kworè and Komo ceremonies.

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14. soni dɛ, "son of the sacrifice." Drawn on the place for the sacrificer's son, the sign includes a horizontal line representing the knife, for the son may be called upon to replace his father in performing his duty during the ceremonies.

15. yeleka tigela, "the laughing man who cuts." This is the individual in charge of proclaiming the good or bad position of the victims which have been sacrificed.

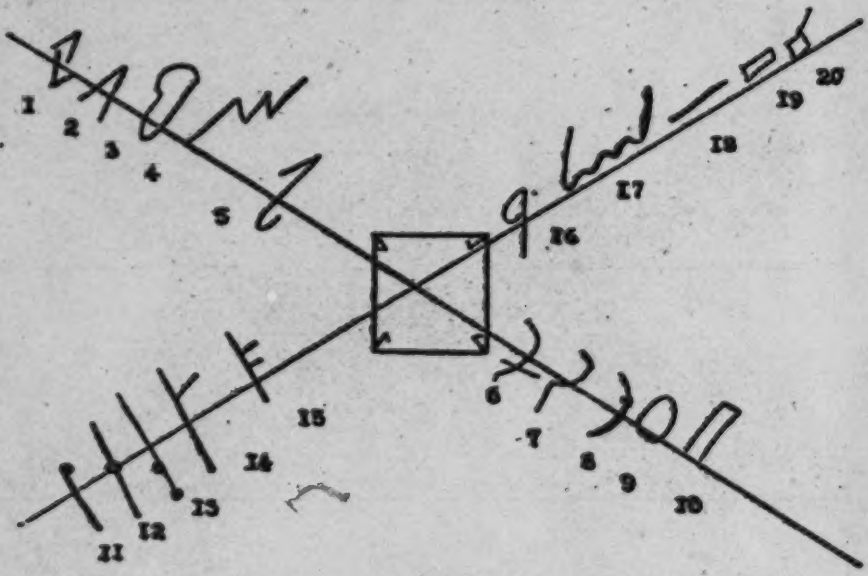

Fig. 12 — Drawing made on the ground by the chief of the Komo to mark, by their signs, the places of the participants during the ceremonies. This drawing, observed in the village of Dougoutiguibougou, is complete. When the branches forming an x are missing, the central square is always represented. (Drawing by an informant)

On the southern branch are placed the signs representing the blacksmiths; they relate to the institution of circumcision and to the functioning of the Komo of which these artisans are the dignitaries.

16. boffema, "honored person." Place of the aged blacksmiths.

17. wara da dyuru, "string from the mouth of the man armed with hooks." This is the small string of the flute, called "voice" of the Komo.

18. wara da, "mouth of the man armed with hooks." The flute of the Komo.

794 19. pembele. This sign represents both the society's pembele and
869 the board of the same name used for circumcision.
532 20. gosilande. The sign designates the primitive club and the small mallet used in circumcising.

The ensemble of these figures, representing a summary of the universe in its arrangement and its movement, forms the scene upon which the actors in the ceremony take their places. The latter are in a way the living embodiment of these drawings as well as the movements which change the order of presentation and must be executed with special precautions. In effect, any change made in the arrangement of the actors in the scene is felt to have repercussions in the universal organization. This is why the movements of each one give rise to rituals of forgiveness and purification concerning the sign corresponding to him (1).

1. See below.

F. Ceremonies of the Komo

794 The ceremonies in which the mask participates take place several
796 times a year according to the decision of the members. Their purpose is to discuss the interests of the society, to make joint decisions assuring the prosperity of its members, to promote harvesting, and to commemorate the organization of the Komo.

Three principal ceremonies are celebrated: the first, called /160/ "anniversary of the Komo" (komo sanyelema), at the end of the dry season; the second after the harvest, for offering of the first produce, as the mask is never taken into the fields at the time of cultivation; the third during the cold season at the time of circumcision. They involve sacrifices offered in the cemetery in honor of the dead as well as divining rites. Occasional ceremonies may also take place inbetween upon the membership's decision; the mask is taken out for purifications. The neighboring societies are generally invited to
[574] attend the reunions and the drinking which follow (2).

2. The important Komo chiefs are thus consulted by strangers in the village, who sometimes travel considerable distances.

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196 The ceremony begins with a council meeting which is attended by all the members and which takes place in an enclosure, kara so. Early in the morning, the Komo chief, aided by two men of his age grade, draws upon the ground the figures which indicate the places of the participants and of the material objects (1).

1. See Fig. 12.

When the members arrive, they immediately place themselves, without risking disorder, near the sign proper to the group to which they belong. Each one, in passing, greets the person who will perform the sacrifice. The inhabitants of the neighboring villages are received by a member in a spot somewhat removed. They state the group to which they belong or draw their sign on the ground without saying a word. The chief acclaims their arrival with these words: "The strangers have come; the strangers, sons of the Komo have come; their place is in their hand; let tolerance be granted them" (2). The

2. Dnow nana, komo dɛ̃ dnow nana,
u siki yoro be u bolo, yafa ka kɛ u ma.

council meeting is then opened.

The chief sits down in the central square, facing the west, places the boli to his right, listens to the propositions of the members, all of whom similarly face west. If he rises, all conversation ceases; it resumes only when he is again seated. If a member wishes to move during the meeting, he must ask the permission of the chief of the Komo. The latter goes to place his hand near the sign as an excuse for the man. When the member returns, the chief of his group takes a little water with which to pour over the drawing as a purification (3).

3. The temporary absence of a member is called: wuli ka bo komo ko la, "to rise and leave the affair of the Komo" and the return do dye ba la komo jine sabu la, "to enter into the great union of the spirit of the Komo."

When all questions concerning the society or the village have been examined and discussed, and when the decisions have been reached, everyone stands up; the drawings on the ground are erased with water.

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a) Tree of the Ndomo, at the center of the uncultivated square (Soroba).

Plate V

b) Stone altar (Banankoroni).

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a) Hut of the Komo (Komodimini).

Plate VI

b) Holes for refuse (Banankoroni).

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794 The rituals in which the mask participates generally /161/ take
796 place the following night in a thicket called komo tu, "bushy one of
201 the Komo," situated in the bush near the village.

As soon as they hear the mask whistling, the members approach according to their age grades, the older ones first. In principle, only those under the jurisdiction of the functioning Komo and their guests are present. However, any initiated stranger who wishes to attend the dances makes his status known by means of the following signs:

1. Shouting "hé" or "ho," he presents his right hand to the mask with all the fingers folded except the index and the little finger which point towards it. The index, in this case, represents the circumcised man, member of the Komo society, in sum, the petitioner. The little finger, which is smaller, expresses this man's submission to the Komo and the fact that he is and will always remain its inferior.

2. He puts a twig of straw in his mouth; the light colored straw signifies that his heart is pure, that he has no evil intention. The mouth, closed over the straw, shows that the man, "understanding the word of the Komo," has no need to speak of it.

3. On his arrival, he says: ani bara (literally, I am with the bara). The masker, hearing these words, crouches and then straightens up suddenly before the newcomer as though to frighten him. The latter then says: "I am a new child of the society" (1). When he is accepted,

1. Ne ye timidɛ̃ kura ye.

the masker resumes the dance and the ceremony continues.

794 The rhythms of the Komo bear the general name of komo bara or
796 komo foli dunu (literally, rhythm of the Komo drums) (2). They are
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2. The word bara is reserved for the rhythms of the masked Komo dances. The rhythms of the profane dances of the elders are called mabere fo, those of the young men, bɔ̃dyala, those of the girls, kofili.

numerous, adapted to the rituals they accompany, each endowed with a separate name. The Bambara classify them into three categories: the rapid, violent, and difficult rhythms performed against the non-initiates; the soft rhythms for circumcision; the sad rhythms for funerals.

794 796 533 During the masked dances, once the drummers have begun the rhythm of the Komo, they must neither slow down nor cease their playing; otherwise the masker will rush at the player and threaten him with his left hook. In this case, the musician changes the rhythm in order to soothe the masker and sings: "You, old men, you are with the bara; listen, this bara is not empty." (1).

1. Aw ni bara makorabaw; klo madyo,
nin bara te bara lakulo ye.

794 796 198 /162/ The masker participates in the ceremony not only by dancing and by uttering cries, whose pitch and intensity vary according to the action which he is preparing or performing.

A guttural and very muffled cry (buâ, buâ, buâ) called komo suruku (literally, hyena of the Komo) is used to frighten the participants.

A shrill and short cry (pyę, pyę, pyę) called kono fari kasi (literally, cry of the bad bird) is frequently used to animate the dance and amuse the spectators.

A long and softer cry (ɓ-ɓ, ɓ, ɓ, the last three ɓ's being very close together) called morokorobaw kasi (literally, cry of the ancestors) greets the chief and his age grade.

794 796 During the mask dance, the Komo's griot encourages it by reciting the devices which exalt its power, authority, and judicial powers:

"You, Komo, you griot of the Komo, you, ringer of the bell, from whom do you come? You come from Makanta Djigui. You, bad Komo, from whom do you come? You come from Soma Moriba. To whom did this one give it? He gave it to the sons of the blacksmiths. Who are the owners of the Komo? Makanta Djigui, Soma Moriba, the sons of the blacksmiths. These have not known shame; you must not be ashamed. These have not received humiliations; you must not be humiliated.

"You, little living Komo, enemy of non-members, friend of members, take your enemy's heart, take his liver. I follow behind you and not before you. Ah! Komo; you, killer of the fat dead ones, shroud of those living, act upon him who provokes you as you do upon him who does not provoke you" (2).

2. E komo, e dyeli, e ndara kolo fo,
e bwora dyeni ma, e bwora makanta

794 796 jigi la, e komo fare ma e bwora dyeni ma, e bwora soma moriba, o ya di dyeni ma, oy a di numu dew ma dyenuye komo tigiw ye, makanta jigi, soma moriba, numu dew; oluw ma malo, aw kana malo, oluw ma lebu, aw kana lebu.

E komo ni nyenama biribalyuw dyugu, birilew nyima i dyugu son ta i la ka bye ta mbi ko nti nye.

E komo, i su klo la faba, nyenemaw kasange, minya kila a ko la, mi ma kila a ko la.

When the drums beat and the dances are animated, and when the masker cries, it is said that "the bara of the komo is hot" (komo bara wusule do). The ceremony is in full swing.

Diverse incidents may occur in the course of the masked dances which give rise to interpretations and interventions by the members.

794 796 787 When one of the arrows attached to the mask trembles, it indicates the presence of a sorcerer in the assembly. The elders remove the arrow and immediately order /163/ the ceremony to stop. After the drums have been silenced, they request the culprit to present himself, which he immediately does. These words are spoken to him: "Your arrow attacks you" (1). He then offers a ram and beer in sacrifice,

1. Komo bye bila.

while the arrow is replaced and the dances resume. If an arrow falls in the course of the dance it indicates the presence of a sorcerer in the village.

794 796 If a part of the costume falls off, it is picked up by three members and kept to be burned with the refuse that is later swept up (2).

2. See p. 259.

794 796 688 If one of the participants has broken the taboo and revealed the secrets of the Komo during the past year, the masker whistles, asks the drummers to stop playing, and says: "Here is a grasshopper for me." These words express the contempt in which he holds the culprit. Next he adds: "There is the smell of a corpse here" (3).

794 796 688 766 3. Su kasa be.

The man lowers his head and all move away from him. The masker wounds him with the right hook. He is banished from the circle of dancers and probably will die several days later. His funeral rites are not solemnized. The corpse is tied by the feet and removed from his home through a hole made in the wall to prevent his evil nyama from returning to the family. The body is beaten with switches so that the soul may leave the village forever, and is thrown into the common grave or placed in the cleft of a tree, which is then closed up with thorny bushes. In this case it is often devoured by the hyenas. The clothing which belonged to him is hung on the hook placed on the outside wall of the sanctuary. No one has the right to weep for his death and no one ever mentions him again. To do so would be an offense to the Komo.

794 796 688 782 It may also happen that the emergence of the Komo occurs without the village being warned. In this case, if a young girl imprudently approaches the place where the dance is being held, the masker may kill her with one blow of its hook directly upon her head. A little of her blood is then placed as an offering on the nya and her jewelry thrown into the river where her soul goes to replace the virgin who, in former times, was annually offered to Faro.

G. Effects of Broken Taboos

794 783 The breaking of the taboos attached to the altars or to the mask reacts upon each of the parts affected as it does upon the whole and brings about a diminishing of the Komo's power, which is abandoned by Faro and the ancestors. A purification may be performed /164/ in certain cases. The error is then corrected and the spiritual forces reenter the altars.

If a woman or a noninitiate catches a glimpse of the nya, the komo tigi and his age grade go down to the river bank and, to the sound of drums, present the culprit's apologies to the spirit:

"I have not come for someone else, I have come for myself, I have come to reestablish the race of our fathers" (1).

1: Ne mana ma nyini; ne mana nyere nyini,
ne ma na m fa sia tuku ko la.

794 783 The victim offered by the responsible party then has its throat cut, its body is thrown into the water, and the members take some black earth to smear again on the regenerated nya.

If the chief does not observe the chastity imposed upon him before every sacrifice, he must advise the elders of his age grade and purify the altars by sacrificing two roosters or a goat.

It would seem that the taboo of the nimara boli may not be broken without danger, and that in this case the fault is almost irreparable. The Komo is affected not only in one of its parts, but in its entirety, and a general reordering becomes necessary for the society. The chief and the elders carry away the principal altars to their place of origin, that is to say to the village where they were consecrated through contact with those of the local Komo (1). The owner of this latter Komo

1. See p. 190.

keeps the tainted objects for seven days. After this delay, the petitioners return, bringing victims which are sacrificed upon the altars now placed in contact with those from which they originated (2). The

2. The nimara boli is "rubbed" on the nimara boli of the tro ba, the nyɔ̃ boli on the nyɔ̃ boli of the same, etc.

meat is eaten by the chief who is being consulted, and by him alone. The petitioners must then return home with their sack without speaking a word to anyone during the trip.

This ceremony, which is a second consecration, may under no circumstances be repeated. If the taboo is broken once more after a first fault and a first reordering, the Komo is considered to be entirely destroyed and the village is sometimes abandoned by the inhabitants who have "lost their soul" and who fear the wrath of Faro; they disperse, unhappy and powerless. Some conversions to Islam or to Christianity may have had no other motivation.

H. Role of the Komo

794 182 "The Komo is a society which unites the highest divine power, men, animals, and plants until the /165/ end of the world. It is the

794 182 keeper of souls. When there is no longer life on earth, when there are neither men, nor animals, nor plants, the Komo will awaken the souls of the dead which have been in its keeping for eternity."

As a repository of the spiritual forces of its members, the Komo is involved in most of their activities and participates in daily life. Birth, circumcision, marriage, burial, and the cult of the ancestors are all characterized by its direct or indirect intervention. It plays a remarkable role in agricultural life (rain, agrarian rites, household and communal excrement) as well as in the functioning of handicraft technologies. Collective issues (war, political conflict) and economic questions are submitted to its decision. In fact, the members' belongings (grain, cowries) are kept in granaries for which the chief is responsible and from which he agrees to make interest loans to needy members. The chief of the Komo, who is a diviner, is consulted directly by petitioners. Assisted by the elders of his age grade, he is also responsible for dispensing justice (1). Thus the name of an un-

1. The judicial role has been notably pointed out by L. Tauxier in La Religion bambara, p. 300.

worthy member is pronounced above the pembele which is immediately removed. This gesture deprives the culprit of the protection of Pemba and abandons him to misery and shame.

On the other hand, the actual functioning of the society develops social life. The initiates of neighboring villages are invited when the mask is brought out and a number of marriage negotiations are concluded during the drinking parties which follow the ceremonies. These also favor cultural exchanges. It is during publicly held conversations that teaching is furthered, for the rituals are commented upon and explained, and the myths and their metaphysical foundations are presented in detail. The most knowledgeable informants all speak of nights spent in listening to the competent elders around the jars of millet beer.

The Komo is the repository of traditional beliefs and rules of solidarity between members. It diffuses a thorough knowledge of civic and moral instructions, the rights and duties of the members, the taboos and sanctions which affect those who break taboos. Its juridical role makes it a disciplinary agent: it is a powerful support of the Bambara social organization.

/166/ The Kworę

794 821 The Kworè society, kworę dye (literally, reunion of the Kworè) consists of individuals around the altars (kworę boli) on which rites are performed concerning the skies, space, the cardinal points, the atmospheric manifestations of Faro, and particularly rain. Kworè literally means "dried up pond."

The rituals are intended for the Kworè spirits who depend upon Faro and who live in the kaba fin (third sky). They are in charge of watching over the rains sent from the wolofla kaba (seventh sky), which cross the other skies and "the void" before reaching the earth. The spirits struggle in the skies and in space against the mahalakillen of the koblenkaba (fifth sky) who try to stop the water. Lightning, thunder, and thunderbolt are the effects of these struggles.

794 778 The principal ceremonies take place around a tree, called kworę tigi, which is situated to the east of the village and is the usual habitation of the spirits when they descend to receive men's offerings. The altars are placed in a hut built in the bush; other samples of these are kept in the chief's residence. A large stone, kworę fara, located near the village and placed in the ground above some symbolic objects, also receives offerings. The Kworè society is the owner of a communally cultivated field, in which small millet, safiõ, is exclusively sown and the harvest of which is kept for the needs of the cult.

A chief, the kworę tigi, is entrusted with the care of the altars and performance of the ritual.

A. The Altars

The altars of the kworę are placed in a sanctuary called buku sãmpere ni (literally, little hut of thunder) and situated at a certain distance from the village because of the dangers from lightning. The door is low and very narrow so that the forces held within may not escape.

The altars are composed of the following objects:

1. A large sac of the skin of a male goat, kworę boli sãmpere, open at its upper extremity and suspended by a boa skin (miñã) which symbolizes lightning. This sac, which has three compartments, contains copper, water from the Niger, rain water, and the "thunder stones" of the society. The "thunder stones," sãmpereni or sãmpere

dyele, play an essential role /167/ in the rain cult among the Bambara as among the other blacks of the Sudan. They supposedly fall from the sky with lightning bolts (1).

1. They are picked up at the spot where they fall and are the object of an important trade.

At the time when a Kworé society is being founded, the chief, generally accompanied by the komotigi, visits villages where lightning has struck in order to buy stones and to choose them with a knowledge of the case. Each member contributes to the purchase of one stone.

2. Another sac also made of the skin of a male goat, called nõ boli (boli of millet), is suspended from the roof by a serpent skin. This altar is dependent upon the nõ boli of the Komo, which presides over germination. It contains small millet from the fields of the Kworé and some of the small millet from the nõ boli of the Komo.

3. A sac containing water from the last rain, called ngule sãndyi.

4. A sac made of the bladder of an ox, jettemine boli, makes it possible to see the water level from the outside. After each rainfall the level is checked by the chief and the water is poured into the ngule sãndyi where it is kept throughout the year.

5. A sac containing thunder stones intended for sale:
   (a) To be suspended from roof to counteract lightning.
   (b) To attract lightning; in this case the stone is placed under a shelter in the bush.
   (c) To make a new kworé boli.

This sac is the object of libations consisting of rain water drawn from the ngule sãndyi, to which has been added a pulverized thunder stone.

6. An axe called sãmpere dyele koro (literally, old thunder axe) of an ancient shape, made of a hewn stone set in a wooden handle. Considered as the "mother of the thunder stones," it is not removed from the altar until the very last when the rites for rain have failed.

Pieces of mirror brought by members of the society are set into the wall; the reflections from these mirrors also are supposed to affect rainfall.

794 778 B. In the chief's residence, there are replicas of the axe and the altars. According to the needs, they are transported to the shore of the Niger, into the fields, or to the public square during the ceremonies. The originals, on the other hand, remain sheltered from the looks of outsiders and risks of impurity. Moreover, the chief owns a special altar, the kworę ni, "soul of the kworę," /168/ which contains the spiritual principles of the members who do not belong to the Komo society. The kworę ni is placed upon the chest of a dying man and receives his soul at the moment of death as does the nimara boli of the Komo (1). It is regularly saturated with rainwater.

C. The stone of the kworę, of which the lower part is crudely carved into seven teeth called kworę fara ni, is stuck into the ground after the following objects have been buried in this site. (See Fig. 13)

1. Three thunder stones called: fara ba, "big stone"; /169/ fara bye, "stone point"; fara joli, "blood of stone." These recall the presence of Faro's power, rain, under the altar. When placing them, the following words are repeated seven times: "Help us" (1)!

1. A ka demme.

2. Three whips, the male number, testimony to the course of men who withstand the pain of the strokes without complaining. When they are buried the following words are spoken: "Let us be courageous" (2).

2. A ka farina.

3. A kongobwona axe (see p. 160) which recalls the ancestors' victory over famine; it announces harvests and future wealth.

Drawings are made on the stone during the annual ceremony. In the center, a black dot called faro dęzo, "womb of Faro," represents the spirit. It is framed by two series of three whips, each "to defend him," as well as by the first three of the eight ancestors (one of which was Koumabana) and by seven figures representing the members.

[F184] 794 785 Woman is the taboo of the Kworè. Only males may approach the sanctuary and the altars. Any circumcised male desiring to participate in the ceremonies must be initiated. The postulants are brought together by the chief under the Kworè tree, at the foot of which a fire is lit; each carries a twig of fiuāna wood. They suffer

uncomplainingly the burns inflicted upon them with a torch and they whip themselves vigorously. The chief next teaches them the role of the Kworè spirits, the rituals celebrating them, and the symbolic value of the objects of the cult.

Some of the members are designated to take the role of kworę duga during the ceremonies. Masked and waving freshly cut branches in each hand, they mount a wooden horse, the kworęduga so (1). Thus

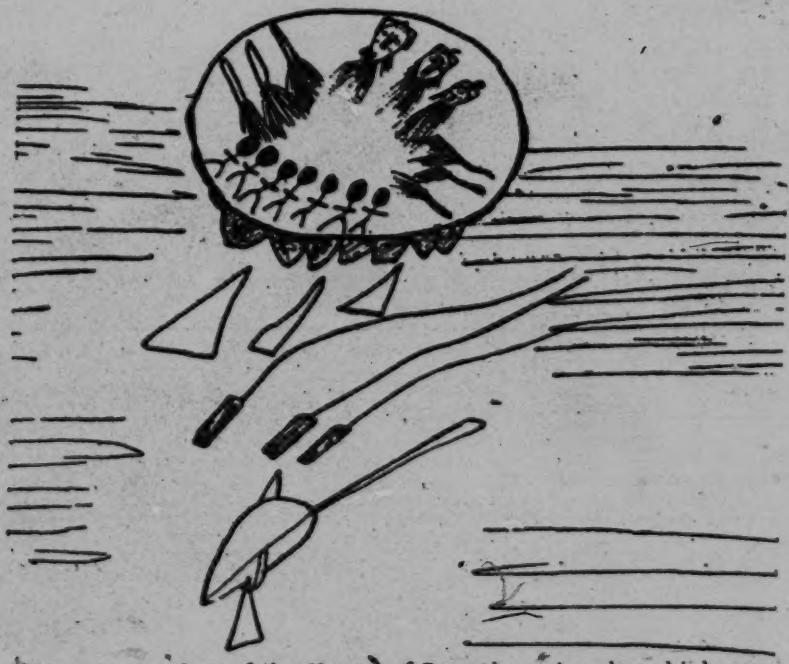

Fig. 13 —Stone altar of the Kworè of Banankoroni under which are buried three neolithic axes, three whips, the ritual iron axe, kongobwona. The drawing, made in the course of the annual ceremony, represents the first three of the eight ancestors who received the word, the members of the society, and the Kworè whips; the black spot is the "womb of Faro." (Drawing by an informant)

1. The kworę duga (literally, vulture of the Kworè), also called togoro koya, "jesters," are as their name indicates, jesters who have the right to joke about

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> the most sacred things; their social position is comparable to that of the griot. In former times they were the first to sacrifice to the boli.

equipped, they represent the spirits of the kworę, mounted on their winged horses to attack the sky. One of them wears a mask, the kworę ku, to represent the ancestor of the group (1).

> 1. The materials, wooden horses, and masks are blackened by fire and saturated with karite oil.

794 Close bonds unite the Komo and the Kworè. Their cults complement each other and an individual wealthy enough to meet the necessary expenses may belong to the two societies. In fact, one of the Komo's roles is to watch /170/ over the progress of the cultivations: its altars watch over the soul and the vital force of the crop seeds. The harvest, however, depends on rain and thus comes under the jurisdiction of the altars of the Kworè. The complementary activity of the two societies is certainly felt by the users who declare that "the ñõ boli of the Komo and the Kworè are united in action."

Some authors have raised the question of the Kworè's greater antiquity, when compared to that of the Komo, on the basis of the "Priapic" aspect of the former's ceremonies (2). Since the real purposes

> 2. See L. Tauxier. La Religion bambara, p. 311.

of the institution have almost completely escaped these observers, it was not possible for them to penetrate the meaning of these rituals. It is at the foot of the tree of the Kworè that men call upon the skies where Faro reigns; they pray to the koblenkaba in case of war, the sunãnkaba in case of epidemics, etc. The annual ceremony is a representation of the action of the invisible powers to obtain the rain necessary to men. The burns and the blows which the members inflict upon themselves, as well as the galloping of the kworęduga, symbolize the celestial struggles of the spirits among the unleashed elements.

The Ceble or Ndomo

794 Like their circumcised and adult elders, all the uncircumcised and nonexcised members of a village form a society, called ceble (literally, red man) or ndomo (literally, gathering), whose members are called ndomo dew, sons of the ndomo, or also ndomo ngow. The society of the ndomo is older than that of the Komo (1). Formerly it brought

1. It is said: ndomo ka koro komo ye, "the ndomo is older than the komo." Certain aspects of the ndomo have been described by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné, p. 15, and L. Tauxier, La Religion bambara, p. 380 ff.

together a great number of adolescents since circumcision was performed much later. Nowadays, since children are operated upon very young, its importance has diminished, but as it contains the power of the uncircumcised it still plays an important role which is expressed even in its name. Red is a symbol of power and energy; it is also the [822] sign of the sacrifice.

The ndomo is directed by a chief assisted by a person who performs the sacrifices, murukalatigi (literally, master of the knife handle) and by an organizer of ceremonies, the dyolokotigi (literally, master of the chain).

It is in the course of agricultural work communally performed that the /171/ most energetic member is name chief; he is the one who has best and most rapidly fulfilled his task and who has, in addition, caused the adversaries who have been presented to touch the ground three times. The chief, who is responsible for the altars of the ndomo, sees to the instruction of the initiates, regulates their competitions, nominates the bearer of the mask and the one who is charged with the maintenance of ritual objects. Finally, he officiates during the collective ceremonies. The murukalatigi cuts the throats of the victims; he cuts out and makes the masks and other ritual objects. The dyolokotigi directs the ceremonies and makes decisions about the members' advancement.

The hierarchy is composed of five grades corresponding to the five fundamental altars. Each grade is passed annually after special

194 instruction and initiation. Five years are thus necessary to reach the highest rank. Each promotion is paid for by the individual providing [782] two roosters whose throats are cut upon the altars at the end of the annual ceremony which takes place in the bush under a tree called the kalabana, following communally performed labor. After meal, a [526] fight called bari, organized under the direction of the chiefs, puts the young boys in opposite groups and gives them the opportunity to show their courage and their initiative.

194 The members' activity consists of collective work at the time of 476 the cultivation. The millet and the gifts in kind received in payment for the work are owned communally.

A. Material Objects of the Cult.

194 The society is the owner of ritual objects such as a mask and whips 718 which are usually placed in a hut, ndomo buku, at some distance 534 from the village.

The objects, numbering five, are rudimentary musical instruments. The wara, the clawed one, or diara, the lion, is a wooden bull-roarer approximately 35 centimeters in length, which is manipulated by means of a string a meter long. Sometimes the object is of iron and of smaller dimensions. The tori, toad, is a small box which gives off a nasal sound when it is scratched. The kono, bird, is made of two pieces of gourd bound together by spider webs. The wulu, dog, is a small calabash of about 10 centimeters in diameter, punctured by four holes. A string, threaded through its neck, allows it to be rotated like a rhombos. The jineble (literally, red spirit) is a buffalo horn pierced by three holes, /172/ obstructed by spider webs, into which one blows and which produce a loud, flute-like sound. One society usually owns several specimens of each of these instruments.

194 The mask, said to be the most ancient object, is of sculptured wood 718 representing a human face crowned by several vertical, rather long 532 horns (1). The whole is completely decorated with cowrie shells and

1. The masks most often carry eight horns, but this rule is not always respected.

red kise (2), grains which represent the blood from the offerings. The

2. Linociera sudarica.

794 778 532 high forehead, black and always smeared with karite butter, confers upon the face a beneficial power. The whole mask is regularly rubbed with ground charcoal powder and with the juice of the kola nut.

794 778 The whips of the mask (ndomo busa) are made of ñuana branches famous for their suppleness. They are made at the time of the annual ceremony and only renewed the following year. At the time of their manufacture, they are soaked in water, which the members of the society then drink "in order not to have to suffer from the blows which they will receive."

[824] Each member also possesses a long whip made of the branches of a bush, the ngere ni, (1) which is also called "tree of Faro" for it

1. Hibiscus pandoriformia.

grows in water, and which contains part of the beneficial power of the spirit. The whip is used to try out the children's courage. The one who cries or complains will carry this handicap with him through life; even after his circumcision he will be referred to as a coward.

B. Initiation

794 526 Each new grade is acquired in the course of the annual ceremony which takes place after the harvest. An elder entrusted with the sacrifices cuts the throats of the roosters offered by the postulants over the tree of the ndomo (Pl. V, a) and over the ritual objects placed at his feet, and then pours boiled millet as an offering. During this time the young people plow the ground where the contest, bari (2), is to take place; this fight will pit them against each other

2. To make oneself fall, the joust.

and give them the opportunity to show their courage and competitive spirit.

The chief designates the fighters two by two who are watched over /173/ by the dyolokotigi. In the contest, during which any use of legs or feet disqualifies the fighter, the one who makes his adversary fall three consecutive times is chosen to be initiated into a higher grade on the following night. After this contest, the losers must bring two additional roosters if they also wish to be initiated. Then a meal eaten in common brings together the members of the society and the postulants.

794 On the following night, the future initiates are led into the bush to a place called biri yoro (literally, place of initiation), where they sit down upon the ground, their heads covered with a piece of cloth.

At a sign from the dyolokotigi, a member causes the ritual instruments to roar or sing in succession; then he hides them and the postulants must find them. As they are not able to do so, a series of hazings are inflicted upon them (1) after which they are shown the

1. These hazings are often severe; fun is made of the ignorance and fears of the postulant.

instruments and each in turn made to repeat the solemn oath:

"If you have heard the dyara of the uncircumcised, that is it. Chisel a piece of wood, make a hole, put a string through, turn it, it is that which is the word of the ndomo dyara. If you reveal it, may it take your heart, may it take your liver, may it kill you" (2).

2. Ni ye me bilakorow ka ndomo dyara, nin do ka djiri dese, ka wo bo o la, ka dyuru ndo o la, o bi fyeku, o de bi ndomo dyara ka fo, ni ya korobo, a ki sõ ta, a ki biñe ta, a ki fa.

Next, they are made to lick three times the object which is then entrusted to them so that they may learn to use it. The same ritual is performed for each instrument, and the prayer is repeated with only a change in the name.

The young men frequently sacrifice upon the altars of the ndomo. 794 The usual content of the sacrifice is the gray lizard /margouillat/, 782 busa, likened to an uncircumcised boy (its tail representing the 825 foreskin). The victim's wanzo, liberated by death, joins the wanzo contained in the altars and, consequently, that of the members. [262] The animal is then cooked and eaten.

C. Activity of the Society

794 At the time the fields are being cultivated, the members who are called upon to do work take their ritual objects along. The young

girls who provide water and are present during the work sing to encourage the best workers or to insult the lazy ones.

Once their task is done, they partake on the spot of dishes /174/ especially prepared for them. As they leave they make their instruments roar and resound. By these means, the force (wanzo) which they have spent in working is "recaptured in the wind" by the twirling of the rhombos and returned to the ndomo, that is, recovered by themselves. For if their wanzo has permitted a useful effort, it has penetrated into the fields, thus diminishing by so much the store of the ndomo. On the other hand, this power, which is useful for cultivation, is harmful to germination. To leave it in the earth would injure the harvests. And this is why, as an extra precaution, the owner burns a gray lizard in his plot the following day in order to rid it completely of this evil accretion.

During the dry season, ceremonies to bring out the mask are performed for the purpose of soliciting gifts from the inhabitants of the village. The members stand in a circle before each door while the masker dances the ndomo do, the dance of the ndomo. The chief designates two young men who, placed in the center, each receive three whip lashings from their comrades. Then, the youngest strikes the masker who dances again, hitting in his turn with his long whip those who do not lower their heads correctly as a sign of respect.

If the owner who is being solicited turns a deaf ear, all sing to make fun of him and to force him to give:

"It is the custom, we are not hungry; it is the custom of the world, we are not hungry" (1).

1. Lada do, kongo tawna, dyé lada do kongo tawna.

When all the houses have been visited, the children line up to return and, at the chief's order, walk towards a crossroad, which is the seat of the protecting spirits of the ndomo. There they leave the mask and break their whips saying: "Crossroads, I entrust myself to you."

The gifts representing food or cowrie shells are divided up among the maskers and the three chiefs. The millet is kept for the day of the annual ceremony.

On following night, the masker goes to the crossroads and brings back to the chief the ritual objects which were temporarily left there.

D. Role of the Institution

794 182 According to Bambara expression, the ndomo is "the mother of the wanzo of the uncircumcised (1)" for its power which resides in the

1. Wanzo ba ye čeble

ritual objects /175/ is composed of the wanzo of all adolescents.

The mask and the altars at first keep a part of the wanzo of the members who wear them, manipulate them, or offer them sacrifices. On the other hand, after circumcision, at the moment of the final leap of the newly circumcised over the ritual fire, the wanzo ultimately leaves them to settle itself in the mask of the ndomo. Thus channeled and conserved, these forces add themselves to those of the uncircumcised in the masks which become the repositories of their life.

[775] Moreover, the soul of the uncircumcised and nonexcised who have died prematurely establishes itself in the altars during the funeral rites celebrated by the members.

The mask of the ndomo is thus the receptacle of the wanzo of the circumcised, living and dead; as for the altars, they contain all the souls of the uncircumcised dead. All of this confers upon the ndomo the responsibility for the life of the adolescents and gives it such power that to a certain extent, this society of young people is feared by the adults (2) who have left it.

794 833 782

2. When an adult, especially a member of the Komo society, has disturbed the peace of a member of the ndomo or has wronged the society, the wanzo may cause him to be impotent. In this case, in order to recover his virility, the man must obtain several tens of gray lizards which are sacrificed in his name on the mask and other altars. The animals are then cooked and the man is completely smeared over with the cooked substance which is then placed in the calabash and poured over the altars; the wanzo assigned to the man by the ndomo thus returns to the latter and the man is rid of its evil.

794 No one may remain a member of the ndomo after his circumcision. It is said that an individual who would continue his activity in the ndomo would acquire a double wanzo.

Chapter 7

RITES

771 The rites of the Bambara are very complex and often involve several institutions. The following descriptions are not of a general character as the rites admit perceptible variations from one village to the next, variations of which the individuals concerned are aware, for there is no absolute rule for any institution or ceremony.

Nevertheless, their various manifestations, which adhere to this flexibility of thought, testify to the unity of the cosmological and religious representations. When a Bambara is invited to be a spectator [574] to the ceremonies of neighboring villages, he is frequently informed about this or that aspect of the ritual which is unfamiliar to him during the drinking parties which follow. In fact, tradition demands that the preceding ceremony be commented upon and explained in front of the beer jars. But the unity of the representations is such that, according to the declaration of a qualified informant, "whoever knows the principles and mechanisms may deduce from them, without explanations, the meaning and symbolism of a ritual which has not been commented upon."

On the other hand, the rites are symbolic even in their most insignificant manifestations: time and place, form of the ritual objects, aspect of the victims, repetition of formulas or prayers, mimicry of the participants, the wearing of certain secular or priestly garments, etc. A very great subtlety presides over the choice of details. It is thus that, during the stages of creation, the supernatural powers have established, organized, and reorganized the universe (skies, spaces, lands) following the itineraries which include "the cardinal directions and angles." The rites in which the cardinal points occur include gesticulation which, depending upon the power

177 considered, follows the chronological order used by this power in the beginning. Similarly, the various skies where Faro reigns are invoked according to their role and the aims of the petitioners /177/ who appeal to them in many cases with very long prayers.

In order not to overload this discussion, a very limited number of rites are described below. Among them, an important place is reserved for those concerning the person (see Ch. 3), which relate to birth, circumcision and excision, funeral rites, and the cult of ancestors. For each one of these the respective positions of the elements composing the individuality at different times have been pointed out.

The rites relating to the ordinary which come next, affect the collective life of the family and village. They concern the residences, the crossroads, and the public squares. They have a very definite character of a gathering together and redistribution of individual forces for the good of the community.

The rain rituals, also collective, which involve the Komo and the Kworè, present a typical example of Bambara symbolism.

Finally, the rituals for "the renewal of the year" have still a more general character: they show close ties uniting individual and community to the cosmos (1).

1. The agricultural rites have not been touched upon in this work as they will be the object of a detailed description in: S. de Ganay, Techniques et rites de l'agriculture chez les Bambara (to be published).

In addition, most of the rituals are duplicated by a series of games of a cosmogonic character which relate to the stages of creation and to its past, present, or future states. See p. 54.

I. Rites Concerning the Person

Birth and Name-Giving

844 273 271 From the moment of his birth, a newborn is washed with millet beer mixed with water. The beer has a purifying quality and the

contact with water which symbolizes "the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni in the matter of family names" is a prefiguration of name-giving.

As soon as the patriarch hears of the birth, he comes and shakes the family pembele over the child's head, three or four times according to the sex, in order to pass on to him the nyama and the qualities of the deceased person from whom he has inherited the ni and the dya. Then, he brings the family altar kere la boli ni into the house of the woman who has just given birth and places it before him. Crouching upon the ground, with fingers spread over the object, he pronounces the following prayer: "You, boli, make me a chief, so that my family prospers, a child is /178/ born, his soul is entrusted to you; I invoke you, boli, night and day" (1).

1. Boli tigi i ka masaya kanu fe, de wolo la, a ni kalifa be i la, ngo boli fu ani kle.

Holding the child on his knees, he places the object on its chest for three consecutive times. Repeating the prayer, he next cuts the throat of a red rooster over the open sac, dips the right index into the blood, and, depending upon whether it is a boy or a girl, makes three or four crosses on the forehead of the newborn who thus becomes the "son of the boli," boli de.

A white sea shell, krokrodya (2), is placed before the newborn

2. Cardita vingens.

and gently moved about to "condense his dya within him." Then it is tied to the child's foot for three or four days according to its sex. At the same time, the mother who is entrusted with the child's dya until the name-giving ritual, adorns herself during the eight days following the birth with a collar (madya, "dya of the person") made from the odoriferous root of the tree bearing the same name. She will wear it until the child takes its first steps so as to protect it and to recall that she herself carried the soul of the newborn.

The name is given on the eighth day by the chief of the Komo. Under the dubale, a tree which shelters the village meetings, the elders assemble around the Komo altars which have been carried to the spot (3). If it is a first son, the father gives one hundred kola nuts,

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3. If the village has no Komo, the name may be given above the paternal Kuafebla.

two jars of millet beer, a ram which will be sacrificed, and money to the griot who will sing during the ceremony.

[789
826] A lock of the newborn's hair is shaved off and kept in a case (sebe) which, before being carried away, will be hidden in an oil container for the following reasons: to protect the person from magical practices; to prevent a donkey from eating it, an occurrence which would cause the child's death; to permit him to seek for himself health and a long life in the image of his hair which will have remained in good condition.

The rest of the hair is carried by a female relative to the river, into which it is thrown in honor of Faro. Next a band of white cotton called faro fini (literally, Faro's clothing), on which someone has "spat" kola nut juice, is bound around the forehead of the newly baptized baby to indicate his subjugation to the spirit.

The senior elder then examines with attention the hairline and the meeting point of the eyebrows on the forehead before announcing in a loud voice the signs determining the child's character (tere). Then he grasps the child and swings it /179/ seven times from east to west, eight times from south to north above the altar while giving it the forename (toko) which he has inherited from a dead person along with the spiritual principles (1). The griot recite the father's genealogy

1. According to another source of information, the eldest son receives the forename of his paternal grandfather, the second son that of his father, and the following sons those of the mother's fathers and grandfathers.

(burudyu); the senanku comes to joke with the newborn and gently pulls his nose and ears.

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304 On the same day the blacksmith draws on the child's face the wolo ti, consisting of seven vertical frontal scars and two horizontal scars under each eye. The first scars represent the complete man (ni and dya); the second, representing the number two, symbol of

852 "the unknown in creation" (see pp 23 and 24), recall man's existence
304 in this state. Consequently he is conscious of the unknown and has the possibility of apprehending it. These scars act upon the tere of the child and give him at the same time strength, courage, virtue, as well as the strength to penetrate the knowledge of the invisible (1).

[842] 1. They may be redrawn at the root of the nose of an adult who has despaired of having any children, or on the thigh of a woman who wishes to be fertile. These scars, drawn at birth, are not the only ones which the Bambara wear. See S. de Ganay, "On a Form of Cicatrization among the Bambara."

852 In a blacksmith's family, the name is given near the paternal
553 forge. In the presence of all the village artisans, the kotigi shaves
326 the head of the newborn while an elder prepares seven small sticks, over each one of which he pronounces the name of an ancestor. The kotigi, whose eyes are blindfolded, pulls out in succession three sticks from the group; the third determines the name which he immediately proclaims. While the women chant, the father removes from his altar the kongobwona axe as well as the other ritual objects. The throat of a sheep is cut over all these objects while a prayer is recited. The newborn's head is rubbed first with the axe, then with shaved off hair saturated with sacrificial blood. This gesture introduces the child into the family group. Next he receives the scars of the blacksmiths.

Circumcision

304 Whereas in former times circumcision was mandatory and performed
561 upon young men (about twenty years), it is now practiced at an early age if the parents are wealthy enough to afford the expenses involved.

/180/ Because of this fact, a child of eight years may be circumcised with an adolescent of sixteen to eighteen years, whose parents are poor and have only slowly accumulated the articles necessary for the ceremony. These two boys will belong to the same age grade (flã), and will be comrades (flani) all their lives, having the same rights and duties. Age thus has a restricted role in social relations.

304 The date of the circumcision alone makes a coherent whole of a
561 heterogeneous group—an age grade within /181/ which all the members owe each other friendship, confidence, and help in all phases of social and private life.

Once the operation has been decided upon, the relatives proceed

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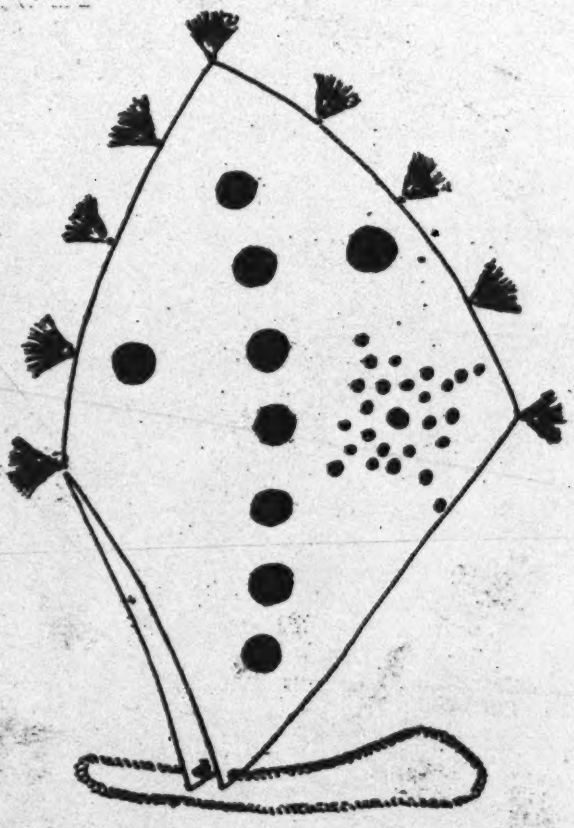

Fig. 14 — Cap of the circumcised Bambara. The nine black spots represent the child, his dya, and the cardinal points.
The design at the right represents the sumangolo, or the coming of the twelve waters of the future. (See Fig. 3)

first to make the cap worn during the seclusion. The white cloth is presented to the Niger by a uterine brother who addresses a prayer to Faro requesting permission to draw with black earth the designs that will cover it. They will protect the child who is in a state of impurity

304 throughout the seclusion, the cap itself guaranteeing protection of his
292 head against the rays of fire from the fifth sky, koblenkaba (see Fig. 14).

Seven large black dots, vertically disposed, represent the child, 3,
304 and his dya, 4, as well as the man, 3, which he will later become, and
292 his future wife, 4. They also insure his protection from east to west.
531 The two other dots insure it from north to south. The cross of small dots recalls the sumangolos, the "realization of the world" (1) and the

1. See p. 56, Fig. 4.

purification obtained after the operation and the loss of the wanzo. Eight tassels (Faro's number) are placed on the cap, whose fringes were spun by a grandmother and are sewn on to "attract the forces of space." A ninth at the top is blackened with the spirit's earth. With his head thus covered, the circumcised boy is placed in the protective and purifying light of Faro. To operate upon a child without putting the cap on him would in fact amount to "bowing down before the acts of Mousso Koroni."

On his part, the blacksmith-circumciser makes preparations for the
304 operation, the essential instrument of which is a knife called boloko
326 kumba moru (literally, knife head, mother of the circumcision).
413 He himself has forged it and carries it in a small leather sheath hung from his hip (see Fig. 15) (2).

[582]

2. The endogamy among blacksmiths is attributed to their role in circumcision and to the fact that their tools, especially this knife, are impregnated with the wanzo of the adolescents.

The handle is slipped into a sort of iron sheath closed at one extremity called kurukun (literally, ball head) and open at the other called sukala (literally, sorcerer's handle). It is forged from one piece with the blade dyomuru fala (literally, orphan of the knife) and called "without pity" in archaic language.

The knife and its handle on the one hand, together with the metal sheath on the other, symbolize the person of the circumcised boy and the foreskin which is to be removed.

304 326 532 413

Before the operation, the blacksmith washes the handle, an act which parallels /182/ the washing of the penis, and draws on the blade ritual designs either in charcoal or with boiled millet (1).

1. Some artisans have, once and for all, engraved the ritual designs on the blade.

The three figures ɲɛ mani saba (literally, three little male persons) represent the first three circumcised men (Gwonna, Gwondo, and Gwonkè) who belonged to the blacksmiths' families at the village of Gwondougou. Every descendant of these ancestors must be circumcised like them. In making the drawing the operator says:

"Gwonna, Gwondo, Gwonkè, you have discovered iron and you withstood the pain (of the first circumcision), you feel shame neither by night nor by day; our feet are placed in your footsteps; the iron did not shame you, let it not shame us; it is the will of Faro... attack, attack, attack" (these last three words are addressed to the knife)(2).

2. Gwonna, gwondo, gwonkè, aw ye neke daɲene, ka neke gale munyu, aw ma malo ɲu ani kle, an se daledo an se danola, neke maw malo a ka na an malo, faro hakili do, ɲu ɲu ɲu.

The four figures, muso mani nani (literally, four little female persons), are the first four excised women, the inventors of pottery, who were the wives of these blacksmith.

The bird is the tatugu koroni, the incarnation of the eight ancestors of the blacksmiths. It recalls that circumcision is painful, hard, hot, comparable to the effects of fire, and that it is necessary to labor and suffer in order to withstand the cutting knife. This is also what the artisan recalls when, as he operates the children, he sings several times over:

"The knife is hot; the timorous man cannot stand it. It is a purification" (3).

3. A ka gwã, ɲɛ ɲito tise ka mufiu, saniyali do.

304 The foreskin, which is tied by a string (drawn at the center of the
532 blade) at the moment of the operation, is placed upon the pembele
413 (black rectangle) and the cutting knife is tapped with a small wooden mallet, gossilã (drawn at the tip of the knife). These three figures receive during operation the offering of the first spurt of blood from the circumcised boy.

The line, which crosses the blade along the middle, separates the bird and the ancestors who gave proof of courage from the instruments used for the circumcision. As a division it symbolizes first of all that each grade of circumcised boys must be considered apart from the others. This is its social meaning. But the delicacy of the line itself has a meaning which applies to the individual: each one must, in his own image, be morally /183/ simple, just, and sensitive. By conforming to the rule symbolically indicated by the design, the individual will become a member of the elite.

304 The date of the operation is fixed when Mousso Koroni's star, sigi
187 dolo (Sirius), rises in the evening at a certain point in the east (1).
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1. See note 1 p. 47. To determine the date, however, the ndomo society may be consulted, which sometimes postpones it to keep its members longer.

After the boys to be operated have been counted, each gets ready, and on the appointed day the mother washes her son's penis with water in which an iron axe or hoe has been soaked. Then she prepares a dish
[362] of rice, ye farina to "dish of man's bravery," which the child eats before he is led to the place of the operation, called yorola sakole "reserved place," located in the bush.

304 When all are gathered together the blacksmith-circumciser operates
326 upon each one in turn after he has made them sit down in a circle on the ground. Pulling and twisting the foreskin, he ties it with the string which he keeps taut by securing its extremity between his toes. He next places the member upon the pembele, rests the knife /on the foreskin/ and taps /it/ with the wooden mallet. In this way he cuts off the foreskin while saying the following words:

"Circumcised one, your father, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, the father of that one too, the ear (the genitals) of the ancestors of the latter have withstood (the pain); you, yourself, withstand it as

304 /184/ they did. Faro, Teliko, Soba! You who are a man, your num-
326 ber is three; three of the penis, three of the twins, designs of the penis, it is the tradition, withstand it; Faro!" (ter) /repeat three times/(1).

1. Bolokodɛ̀ i fa, i moke, o ta fa,
o ta fa were, o ta fa klo masamaw ye
munyu, i yere ka munyu u cǒko la,
faro, teliko, soba, o ye če ta saba ye,
wulu wo, flani wo, kolo nyeke, lada
do, i ka munyu; faro (ter).

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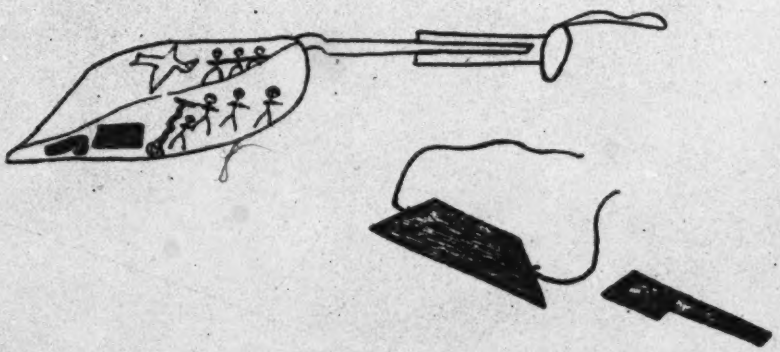

Fig. 15. — The circumcision knife decorated with ritual designs: three men and four women (representing the number seven); the bee eater symbolizing fire; the string; the small board; and the hammer used for the operation (these last two objects are reproduced on a larger scale to the right). (Drawing by an informant.)

304 After the removal, the operator makes scars upon the child's penis,
326 called faro nyeke (literally, signs of Faro). Under the muscle wulu
831 dyuru (literally, rope of the penis), a small hole is carefully made. Since the penis is considered a source of strength, the muscle which maintains it and erects it binds the circulation of the blood and helps man in all his acts. It is through this muscle that man transmits nerves to his children. A straight organ, firmly held in check, keeps the man and his descendants from numerous illnesses; the aim of this mutilation is to obtain complete and well formed foreskins and clitoris in the children of the party concerned. After the perforation,
304 the operator places in the orifice a little pepper and tomato juice
326 while saying:
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304 "Strong (when you form) the child, (you who form) the child (in
326 the) womb, give it to Faro" (1).
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1. Fariña dẽ, dẽzo dẽ, i ka di faro ma.

The embryo, placed in the feminine womb by Faro, receives force and virility from the pepper and is developed with the help of the tomato.

304 Two small holes are carefully made symbolizing man and his dya,
326 while the following prayer is recited:

"Two holes of the penis; I draw the twins and I do it well, the skin of the person is captive, the skin of the person (gives) the twins; withstand them; Faro" (ter) (2).

2. Wulu wo fla, flani mba ti ka nẽ,
moko wolo ye dyo ye, moko wolo ye
flani nye, i ka munyu faro (ter).

"The skin of man, they say, and his entire body are miserable, captives. He is condemned to work, sweat, and suffer. But these two perforations indicate that man is always called upon to procreate twins, the visible images of Faro. Lacking them, he may have numerous children who will return to him, in sweat and work, the seed which he has placed in the maternal womb and which gives shape to the seeds given by Faro."

At the root of the penis, small lines, kolo nyeke, are made with the knife while the operator says:

"Mark of the penis, the genital organ receives this scarification because of the child (whom it will procreate); it is for this that man may be courageous; the one who has (this scar) is respected; great Faro, satiation of Faro" (3).

3. Kolo nyeke, wulu ti kũye dẽ koye,
a ye ẽe fariña ko ye, min ya ke bonyedo,
faro ba, faro fa.

/185/ These recall the scars inflicted upon man's body and symbolize the desired multiplication of his offspring. Finally, they indicate the superiority of the one who has withstood and accepted pain.

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If the patient has inherited the ni and the dya of a child who died just before his birth in the family (in the narrow sense), the penis is perforated while the following prayer is recited:

"You, so and so, the sons of your fathers are dead, may you replace them night and day, the hole in the penis has been made on you; "Faro" (ter) (1).

1. E kari macina, e fa dew bana, e ka o lu soro su ani kle la, wulu wo ke la e la; faro (ter).

This perforation designates him to procreate the children his father has lost.

Seated in a circle, all the circumcised boys bleed upon the ground into individual holes, nyama bla dinge (literally, hole in which the nyama is left) (2), dug between their parted legs, thus passing on to

2. Dinge is a word in the ancient language.

the impure earth their wanzo and a part of their tere. Meanwhile, the circumciser recited the following prayer:

"Blood of the penis, blood of the transfer of the wanzo, blood which chases the wanzo, enter the hole, may you pay (my debt), may you protect me (against the nyama of the foreskin), against bad fortune, against space; o mound" (ter) (3).

3. Wulu dyoli, wanzo fili dyoli, wanzo gẽ dyoli, i bi dõ dinge kono, i kã sara, i kã kisi a makunangoya, i ka kisi kene ama; walawala (ter).

Then, he kneads a bit of blood-covered earth, the principle of which, bwa, is stronger than the wanzo (4) and makes from it a kind

4. The word bwa is provisionally translated by "essence, extract." One says dukukolo bwa or seke, "principle or extract of the earth."

of dressing which he applies to the wounds. In this way the child also

304 recovers part of his tere. The organ is then held up by means of a
326 small apparatus, mine naw, made of a millet stem split in two in the shape of a fork.

"Circumcision is a sacrifice" (1). It is only valid if blood has run,

1. Bolokoli yè saraka ye.

and any patient who has not wet the ground with his blood is wounded on the thigh by the circumciser. The same is true for a child born
[732 without a foreskin. This detail must, moreover, be kept secret by
582] the members of his age grade, since the revelation of a malformation might prevent the individual concerned from contracting a marriage (2).

2. A woman might believe that these malformations are the sign that the man who was operated upon has not lost his wanzo, a fact which would be a definite obstacle to marriage.

/186/ When all is finished, the operator, holding the foreskins in his hand, says these words before burying them:

"We have transferred the wanzo of the circumcised child, may the tere be well" (3).

3. Ãn ye dẽ bolokole wanzo fili la, tere ka ñe.

304 After this, the circumcised boys have their caps put first on their
292 napes and foreheads representing the east-west direction, and then on
561 the sides of their heads representing the north-south direction. All their strength resides from then on in the headpiece which they will wear night and day, without removing it, during the entire period of seclusion.

304 The approach to the site of the operation is formally forbidden to
784 women and uncircumcised males. The one who might go there out of
561 curiosity "would contract the wanzo" (wanzo ba nofe, "the wanzo follows him"). Any uncircumcised boy who might break this law would have to take the consequences at the time of his own operation

304 which would be a dangerous one (1). The same rule applies to the
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1. The approach of the virulent wanzo of the uncircumcised boy acts upon those of the boys undergoing the operations and afflicts them in the genital organs.

enclosure, consisting of several huts, where the newly circumcised boys remain under the surveillance of the sema. The enclosure is situated at a distance of several tens of meters from the village in order to isolate the age grade. For all that touches them, such as clothing, sticks, sistrums, dishes, and refuse, with the exception of the cap, is impregnated with their wanzo.

561 304 [43] The newly circumcised boys receive from their parents gifts of cowrie shells and food called wanzo sababu yala, "in honor of the wanzo," to speed their recovery.

[194] On the night which precedes the sixth day after the operation, a day called daworo, the children are initiated to the Komo (2).

2. See p. 203.

The following day, the sema leads them to the edge of the river, where they wash their wounds for the first time. This act, which brings about direct intervention of the element in which Faro lives, has moreover a social meaning: it consecrates the age grade and from this moment on, the children belong for the rest of their lives to the same fĩã, exchanging jokes and insults which are suitable between senãnku (3). It must be noted that this very simple act of communal

3. See p. 119.

ablution constitutes the inauguration of an age grade of circumcised boys and sets off from that moment all the rights and obligations its members will have toward each other.

A meal, eaten in common and accompanied by songs and dances, ends the ceremonies of the daworo. Hereafter the ablutions are repeated daily until the wounds are healed.

304 561 881 /187/ On the last day, all that has been in contact with the newly circumcised boys is gathered together at a crossroad near the enclosure.

304 561 881 Sistrums, sticks, mats, as well as the wood from the huts and the refuse that has been carefully swept up, are put in a pile which is ignited. Each circumcised boy jumps over the fire three times and then runs to his home without looking back. In this way he finally loses the rest of the wanzo which he has kept after the operation. Only his cap is brought back and given his mother who keeps it until her death. On the next day, after putting on new clothes the boy is taught what he himself is in the following words: "the person is yo and yo is the person (1)" and in the circumstances of creation. He is

1. Ma ye yo ye, yo ye ma ye.
On yo see pp. 18-26.

then admitted completely into the society of the male adults of his village.

Circumcision has a profound effect upon the person. At this moment, the child loses the physical support of the female sex which is the foreskin; he becomes a man (vir) ready to fulfill his role of a male capable of reproducing. Moreover, he "throws off his wanzo" which escapes from the body at the moment of the operation (2). In his

2. Wanzo file la. The wearing of clothing and ornaments assumes great importance in the loss of the wanzo. Among the Bozo, where the children are circumcised very young, they are not considered to have lost their wanzo until the moment these clothes are given to them.

[71]

leap above the fire this force joins, in the altars and the mask of the ndomo, the forces of both the uncircumcised and the circumcised of the preceding years (3).

3. See p. 227.

At the same time the circumcised boy improves his tere, for this latter force, diminished by the bloody operation, increases at the moment when the child dons his new clothing. Until his circumcision, the child only performed minor tasks; after circumcision he is considered a male adult and officially admitted to the rituals and labors of the community.

304 766 The importance of the wanzo and the necessity of its leaving the person are such that in the case where a child dies uncircumcised, the operation is performed on his corpse. If this is not possible, the circumciser cuts his left ear and says:

"I cut the ear instead of circumcision" (1).

1. Mba klo tike bolokoli nona bi la ye.

It is buried with the corpse or kept in the paternal home, but the wanzo leaves the child. If the operation was not performed, it would contribute to the formation of a very dangerous nyama, which would be more aggressive even than that of an old man and from which the society would have to suffer.

/188/ Excision

304 323 189 The operation is performed with a little iron knife by a potter, the wife of a blacksmith. The blade, which is male, represents the sun; the handle, which is female, represents both the clitoris and the moon. The woman protects herself from the wanzo of the newly excised girls by wearing bracelets and charms and by smearing a black salve on her eyes.

304 323 The operation is performed in full daylight at the edge of the village and in the presence of the assembled kinsmen. In certain localities it takes place near the potters' hearth. Each little girl is seated in turn on an inverted pot and is operated upon while prayers are recited. Just as the boy whose foreskin is badly formed is wounded on the thigh, so the girl in the same situation is considered excised if she submits to a test which replaces excision. In the latter case, the woman operator places a hedgehog skin between the girl's thighs and presses these together energetically so as to make the blood run (2).

2. In case the girl is the daughter of a blacksmith, the blood running over the pottery indicates her future role as potter (see p. 169.

The young girls must neither cry nor moan; on the contrary, they sing to exalt the departure of the wanzo.

304 During the seclusion, they wear about their head a piece of white
[592 cloth, Faro's color, which has the same function as the cap of the
534] circumcised boy. They shake a gourd bolokode barani, filled with eight grains or small pebbles, whose sound keeps passers-by away. The leaps, which they perform over the fire made of clothes, gourds, and refuse that have been ignited, end the seclusion and rid them of their wanzo, which goes to settle in the altars of the ndomo.

It is said of a young girl who was well excised that she is well behaved and carries herself with dignity. On the contrary, it is said of a girl of light morals "that her hands were not washed clean" (1).

1. A bolo ma ko ka dye ya.

which means that she was improperly excised.

Funerals

761 The effect of death is to dissociate the elements composing the
764 person. The body becomes a corpse (su) from which the /189/ ni and
775 the dya escape to follow their particular destinies, while the tere is transformed into nyama, an active and dangerous force which wanders about the deceased. The funeral rites aim first to channel the deceased's spiritual elements which must be conserved in the interest of the deceased as well as that of the community. Moreover, through the care given to the body and to these elements, the memory of the dead person is piously kept up. The notion of a final resurrection, promised to all who have lived, inspires these preparations. The bones of the deceased, which are like the exuvia of his physical body, its solid and durable framework, join the exuvia of his soul which is kept in the altars of the Komo. Thus, at the end of time, the dead man "will rise and, to everyone's joy, join his family."

764 The funeral rites, which the Bambara have always celebrated, have evolved along with their beliefs. At the time when the cult of the balanza was flourishing, the dead bodies were hung from trees until they rotted, their bones picked up and kept by their descendants.
[532] The ancestors of the Gwonna then carved pieces of sunzun wood called mani (literally, little person) in the image of the dead. The length of the wood was proportionate to the length of the body; the head, arms, legs, and genitals were carefully reproduced. The mani

764 were kept by the village patriarch and the cult of the ancestors was celebrated upon these altars.

At the present time, the body is buried during rites in which the Komo plays an important role for the initiates. As soon as a member 763 is seriously ill, the family head places upon the dying man's chest 778 the portable altar, kere la boli ni, which belongs to the community. He does not leave the bedside in order to catch the last breath. Immediately after death, without turning back or saying a word to anyone, he goes to the chief of the Komo who places the object in the [775] sanctuary where the altars are kept. The soul is introduced into the nimara boli (1).

[843]

1. See p. 192. In former times, the soul of the dead man was caught between two gourds which were then joined together and hung on the conjugal bed. When the woman became pregnant, the gourds were broken over her abdomen in order to make the soul penetrate the foetus. Later on this method of transmission of the soul was no longer possible because of the impurity brought about by "frivolous discussions regarding the arrangements and situations of creation."

764 Upon his return to the house of the deceased, the family head brushes his hand over the dead man's face to gather his nyama which he then entrusts to Pemba by rubbing the cavity in the family pembele "so that the total of the work he has accomplished during his life will not be dissolved by death, but will be like /190/ an accumulated force serving the community, and so that his intelligence, his qualities, and his skill in different kinds of work, especially in agriculture, will not be lost but will be found in other members of the family. The [778] block of wood, acting as an altar for storing the forces, preserves this nyama until a new birth occurs in the family" (2).

2. S. De Ganay, "Aspects de mythologie et de symbolique bambara," p. 199.

764 The corpse is the object of particular care. In the case of a blacksmith or a Soma, two stalks of millet are placed for a few moments on either side "for the nostalgia of the body" (1). This custom indicates

1. Fari nana fi, literally, "body of the black face."

that the soul, temporarily in the Komo altar, and the exuvia which will later replace it, feel sad for the animate body that will become the prey of the termites. These stalks symbolize the two ancestors who accompanied Koumabana into the great beyond, the death in this case repeating in some way the story of the appearance of death on the world (2).

2. See pp. 45, 46.

The combination of the body and the two symbols adds up to the number three, the male number, and recalls the three taps given to the newborn of male sex at his birth. A few moments later a kinsman places the stalks on each side of the door to the dead man's house. [576] The mourners who come to convey their condolences crouch before them, putting cowrie shells at their feet in the greatest silence, for "to talk and to cry increases the sins of the dead man, and tears increase his burden."

764 554 If the deceased is an important personage, especially if he is chief of the village or head of a family, the signs of the actual world and the future world (bolo ti doniya, Fig. 1) are sometimes drawn upon his index finger and thumb. The senanku, the blacksmiths, and the griot come to recite his device (barama) and receive in thanks the clothes which belonged to him.

764 The eldest son of the Komo chief, who is first advised of the death, brings the news to his father who asks him to announce it to the men of his age grade. Each of the subsequent age grade is notified by a delegate from the preceding one. Finally, the young circumcised men, recently admitted to the society, go to tell the women and the uncircumcised the hour when the mask is to come out. However, only the funeral of an elder, a village or district chief, obligates all the members to move about.

764 The members of the oldest age grade go to the home of the deceased. The eldest son of the Komo chief, holding /191/ the ritual whistle between his teeth, whistles alternatively in the right and left ears, then into the eyes of the dead man, which he closes while pulling his two toes. He then says: "So and so has not answered."

The chief of the Komo next comes to "touch the corpse while it is still warm in order to return to Faro that which belongs to him." He then draws a line upon the body (see Fig. 16) with his little finger dipped in boiled millet mash. In 1 and 2, the strength of the little finger acts by sending away the semen which is in the blood. In 4, it suppresses the voice (for the dead man will talk no more) as well as "the tastes, savors, and appetites of his tongue, the power of his jaws, and the air in his mouth." In 5 it returns all that was in his head, such as ideas, experiences, opinions, folly, and wisdom, through the left ear, removing all the sounds it has heard, the good as well as the bad. Next the ear is plugged. Whatever it has heard will return to the one who will inherit his soul and his double, as the dead man in the grave must hear only with his right ear the whistle of the Komo and all that will be communicated to him. In 6 it removes "the will power and stubbornness" so that the dead may submit to Faro even in the grave. It next touches the navel, 3, and all the joints to send back the semen which lies in man's marrow.

764 The corpse is then transported into a contiguous chamber for an 764 ablution performed by a member of the society who wears over his shoulder the sack containing the Komo altars and who drones out a song celebrating the Soma Moriba Sidibé (1). The two millet stalks

1. The ablution is performed with the contents of a large gourd (dyuru fle nyé) to which are added the contents of a small gourd (dye fle nyé) which represents the "last water of the dead man."

are placed upon the body during the ablutions "which purify and calm his soul."

764 Dressed in its finest clothes, the body is brought back to the main room where its hair is shaved. The deceased's own individual altar is given to the chief of the Komo who places it near the nimara boli. It is at this time that the bell bearer (grindavo) goes to the village

764 and announces that the mask is about to be brought out so that people would go back to their home. At noon, a member of the society puts on the paraphernalia of the Komo society and walks forth, preceded by the son of the chief, who whistles a funeral tune. He wears on his shoulder the sack containing the altars and carries in his right hand the axe and the dagger. The two men are followed by the newly circumcised boys carrying the body and by the members who are present. At the burial ground (sudoyoro) the procession places the corpse on its back near the grave freshly dug by the young /192, Fig. 16 appears here in original text/ /193/ men of the most recent age grade (1). To the rhythm beaten out by three blacksmith drummers,

[535]

1. In the vicinity of Ségou the dead are most frequently buried in the fields; a ronier is planted over the grave.

the son of the deceased and later all the participants dance in turn, kicking up with their feet a little earth over the corpse at the end of each musical phrase.

A female goat (or a male one) brought by the family is sacrificed and the blood runs in part over the altars and in part into the grave, while the chief of the Komo recites the following prayer:

"Let (your family) rest in peace; let our harvests be blessed; let your happiness come to us later; your sacrifices are performed" (2).

2. I ka du to; ana senefé ka barka;
i ka here ka na an ye; i ka saraka be bwora.

The sacrifice performed over the altars is a repetition of that which has already been accomplished in the sanctuary at the time the deceased's soul is deposited. But, to the young initiates who do not know it, it is at this moment only that the transfer of the soul to the nimara boli is effected through the vehicle of the sacrificial blood.

The eldest man of the age grade sucks up with the whistle of the Komo a little blood from the slit throat of the animal and blows on the corpse; another elder sucks up some blood in turn and blows it into the grave. A third does the same and whistles into the right ear of the corpse "so that the deceased, having received a complete sacrifice, may not ask for anything else." A griot next takes the whistles and

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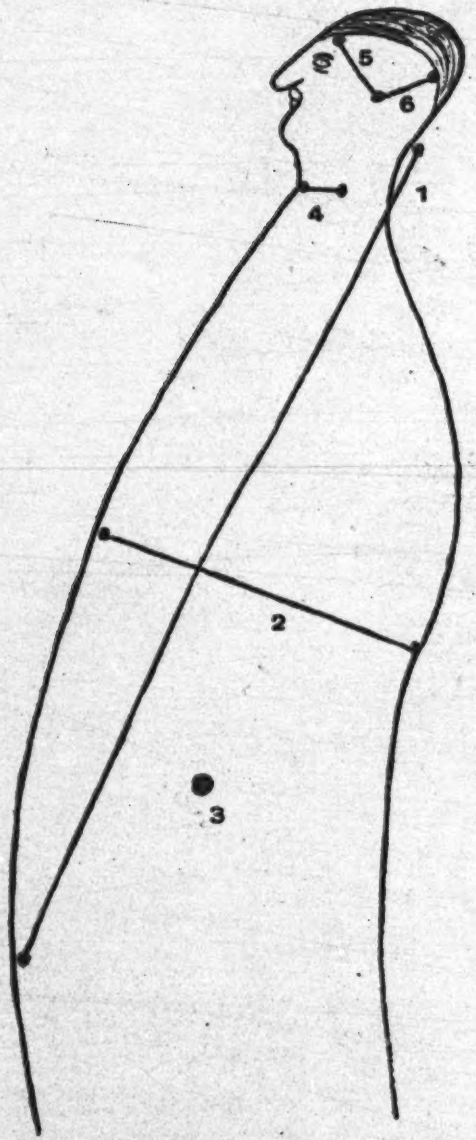

Fig. 16 — Drawing made with millet mash by the chief of the Komo on a cadaver. (Drawing by an informant.)

764 inserts them into the deceased's throat; he fills his own mouth with food previously brought forth by a woman and blows until the stomach of the deceased is filled. The rest of the food is placed near the dead man who is lowered into the grave by his sons and daughters. He is laid down on his right side, facing east, in the hole, sele dɛ̃, dug at the bottom of the grave. The two stalks of millet are placed next to him; they are more powerful than the forces of decay and destruction, and affirm the immortality of the ancestors. Together with the corpse, they are the image of the first three who died and the whole expresses the hope of resurrection promised to men.

While songs burst forth in honor of the deceased, the young men cover him with fresh branches before closing the grave; above the grave the masker whistles to proclaim that hereafter it is he who will settle the problems of the dead.

[768] The objects formerly belonging to the deceased, such as bed, mat, pipe, and razor, are then put into a pile with a little bag containing his hair. Fire is set to the pile while the chief of the Komo recites the following prayer: "Let your burned possessions leave to wait /194 before you, let them leave in smoke. We are behind, we are not in front of you; ask happiness for us. Let all the dyo with the pincers and the anvil come, let peace come" (1).

1. I ka fɛ̃ maralew dyenina, n ka ta i kono i nye, m bita siɲi fe, an bi ko an ti nye, i ka here nyini ã nye; ka dyow ani bala ani kula, dũ ka na.

The masker dances about the hearth, whistling and throwing up dust. The children of the deceased who are impregnated with his nyama leap three times over the flame; the force, absorbed by the smoke, is dissipated with it.

The meat of the sacrificed animal is cooked, eaten by the participants, and the containers are broken.

769 Three days after the death, the family goes down to the river bank and throws in the clothing of the deceased as well as a plate of food; both will serve to clothe and feed the double. They then recite the following prayer:

"My father Faro, a person of my family has died, here is his offering of the three days; make him return again in a woman's womb" (2).

769 2. M fa faro n so ma bana a dyanza ye kle saba kono ye; ni ye se i ka seki, muso kono ma.

The offering of food is then renewed every three days until a birth brings about the return of the double into the world of the living.

If the dead man has no descendants, his altar remains forever in the sanctuary of the Komo near the nimara boli. Otherwise, it is returned within seven days to the eldest son or to the brother who then becomes the head of the family.

769 During the night following the seventh day, the soul returns to eat
775 and drink in the hut of the widow who lives alone. All the dishes containing water or food are therefore carefully emptied and cleaned. The same meal is offered to the deceased the night following the fortieth day after the death. The widow comes out of her house on the
[765] eighth day if she is poor and must work for a living; otherwise, on the forty-first day.

At the end of a variable period of time, the soul, the double, and the name of the deceased are received by a child who is born into the family. The exuvia, mana or folo of the soul, remains in the sanctuary of the Komo as a permanent testimony to his existence on earth. It is conserved by Faro who watches over it, and maintained by the offerings of the living who will in this way bring it to the final resurrection.

When the deceased does not belong to the Komo society, the rites are celebrated over the altars of the societies to which he belongs; his soul is likewise conserved by them. The spiritual principles /195/ of the women, grouped in institutions comparable to those of men, called muso dye, are the object of the same attentions in which is found the rhythm of four days, the female number.

766 If the deceased was too poor for all the rituals, which are always costly, to be observed, two gourds of water are prepared and placed one at the head, the other at the feet of the corpse; he is then lifted in such a way that his image is reflected in the water. This accomplished, eight cowrie shells are placed at his head and eight at his feet and the gourds are covered with a winnowing tray; the image thus conserved is supposedly reflected in the kaba mana, the fourth sky, where Faro,
776 symbolized by the cowrie shells, passes judgment on its state of purity.
787 A divining rite is then performed. If the man is pure, the villagers

attend his burial despite the fact that the rituals have not been performed. If not, he is abandoned to the care of his family.

To neglect the rituals assuring life in the beyond and the security of the living causes the shadow su dya, or the ghost su kere dye (literally, white side of the dead man), to arise and present itself under the same which the dead man had on earth, to claim his due from his descendants.

Ancestor Cult

In the entryway of some residences a supporting stake (cɛ̌ dloma), sometimes marked by seven notches, represents the founding ancestor of the family. On the anniversary of his death the stake is oiled "to refresh his soul." In addition, each year the owner of the house sacrifices to all the ancestors on the family altar, on the stake, and on the threshold of the door. In some villages the ancestors are called upon by tapping the threshold with a little wooden hammer, dyele kala ni, which represents them.

In the courtyards, pieces of wood stuck in the ground (jigi semen dloma) represent the paternal uncle, the brother of the founder, and are used as seats for the heads of families who lean against them "in order to lean well upon the traditions." Farmers, before leaving for the fields, rub their hoes on them to show them to the ancestors.

Before planting the women give the head of the family a ball of raw millet, which he lines up to represent the dead according to age and rank. Then he gives them a pinch of the seed beginning with the one representing the most recent deceased and calling successively all the dead by name. The paste and the seeds are then put in water and the mash thus obtained is poured on the /196/ doorposts to the entryway of the family house upon which the blood of a sacrificial victim also is poured. When the planting time comes, the chief who has prepared the mash made with a few grains taken from the seeds distributes this to the women, beginning with the one who represents the oldest deceased. He asks the ancestors to watch over, during the germination period, the soul of the millet which will descend into the seed with the first rainfall. When the millet has reached maturity, the first seeds harvested are placed in a pot on the threshing floor where the grain will be threshed later, and are distributed to the women in the same manner as the time of planting, the oldest of the deceased having to receive the first of the seed.

769 At an annual ceremony presided over by the Komo, the members assemble in honor of thedead. It is called su so sibiri, "Saturday of the sacrifice to the dead" and is celebrated on a Saturday at the time when the ears are being formed in the millet fields.

The kotigi removes the ancestral tools from their shelter and carries them to the graves. Then the chief of the Komo and his assistants, accompanied by the maskers, carry the altars to the cemetery while singing. Each grave is put for a moment into contact with the nimara boli and the nyama boli; the exuviae of the souls of the dead each visit the bodies they once animated. To the rhythm su bara, "rhythm of the dead," played on the drums, the maskers dance and sing around the graves while mock labor is carried out with each of the ancestral tools. During the whole ceremony the kinsmen wail, the men near the graves and the women in the house. A victim is sacrificed, cut up, and cooked in new pots which are broken after they have been used in order to avoid the contagion of the nyama of the dead. The dances of the maskers are performed during the two days that follow. In some villages the ceremony is repeated after the harvest has been threshed.

Exceptional Cases

The Stillborn

845 783 It is said of a stillborn child that he has lost both his soul and his double, that is to say, his complete being. The parents who are responsible to Faro for this disaster are obliged to find and recapture the spiritual elements of their child, the woman the soul, and the man the double, in the course of long and sometimes painful rituals.

As soon as the woman is able to go out after the birth, both parents are led, shaved and naked, before the members of the family assembled in the courtyard. As testimony /197/ of the deceased to Faro, their hair, mixed with that of the child, is buried in the wall of their home. Then a tomato, representing the foetus, is introduced into [824] a large incision made in the woman's thigh. The man crouches and drinks the juice which drips from the fruit and which symbolizes the double. Each one bows before the elders of the family, holding their hands behind their backs, to apologize for the fault committed, saying: "Here is my humiliated (sex) behind me" (1).

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1. A ngari ko le ye ngo (ngari is a word of the archaic language which expresses submission.)

Each person responds by striking their genital organs with the little finger: "It is well humiliated" (2).

[826]

2. A ngari ko karu. The little finger is the symbol of the whole person; to strike with it is to acquiesce with all one's being.

They are led to the door of their home where the village elders of both sexes are gathered; they repeat their apologies to which the same response is given, accompanied by the same gesture of acquiescence.

[304] The chief of the Komo and three elders of his age grade who have never broken any taboos led them to the river bank where they undergo a new circumcision for the man and a new excision for the woman; the blood which is a gift to Faro must fall into the water. This operation is called "purification of the foreskin" (yiriyiri tige) and the pain suffered has an expiatory value.

The sixth day after the operation the members, gathered on the village square (3), dance and sing to the rhythm of the Komo, which

3. This ceremony, called daworo is comparable to that celebrated on the sixth day after circumcision.

is furiously beaten out, in the following words:

"Circumcised children, it is not good to break the tahoo of the anus. I am telling you, Soma and members of the society, do not count their faults. Faro "(ter) (4).

4. (I ye ye) boloko dew tne tyé maffi boda la; nye fo aw ye somaw moko ka na jigi u la; faro (ter). That is to say, "forgive them." The word anus here replaces the word genitals which, according to propriety, is not spoken.

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The parents are led to the square and turn, open-mouthed, around the circle of dancers, seeking to recapture the soul and the double of their child who is present during the ceremony, attracted by the rhythm and visible to them alone. They turn and dance until they fall into a sort of trance called "fainting of the Komo" during which the soul and the double enter them. If the entrance occurs through the mouth, they cease their cries; if it is through the nose, they appear to smother; if by the eyes, their tears run.

/198/ The rhythm then becomes progressively fainter. Soon it is only a murmur. In order not to interrupt the action, in order that the double and the soul may penetrate gently the stretched out bodies, the murmur decreases further to die out gradually. The drummers' sticks alone beat the air in silence, performing the rhythm called "the drum of the soul" (ni dunu foli). With mouths shut so as not to frighten the invisible, the participants softly drone out a song, ni bonye, which calms the soul and incites it to penetrate the two suffering parents. The latter, accompanied by the musicians, are led back home. They are beaten with sticks so that the spiritual principles may not leave them while that which has just been accomplished is proclaimed in a loud voice as well as the shame and suffering voluntarily submitted to. They are then fanned for the "repose of the child's soul."

The following day, the chief of the Komo and his age grade go to the cemetery to remove the bones of the stillborn child. They place them on the ground, examine them in the open, and dance around them to the rhythm of "the drum of the bones" (kolo dunu) while singing:

"White bones, you, dead ones! I have come to see you" (1). Then

1. Kolo dyew aw ɲ̌u ne nɲ̌a na bo ye.

the grave is once more closed over them.

The man and the woman are then called to the field of the dead (ɲ̌u foro) to swear an oath. While their mouths are full of rain water or water from the Niger, a participant in the ceremony leans over and, "to heat the liquid with the strength of words," recites the following prayer under their chins:

"Kill me if I do it twice: good or bad, chance comes from several places. Faro" (ter) (2).

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2. Ni nya ke ɲyɛ̃ fla i ka n fa; ka kadi ka kago, gariseke bo fã ka cã; faro (ter).

The water swallowed after these words constitutes a solemn promise to Faro not to repeat the fault.

Next, they are carried home, the man by two members of the society and the woman by three of her companions, so that their toes, [824] the temporary lodging places of the spiritual principles which have returned to them, may not touch the impure earth. They remain three and four days, respectively, on their mats without making a movement. On the seventeenth day, with a thousand precautions, they may resume a more normal life, but they will be entirely free only when a birth occurring in the family will eliminate from their bodies the soul and the double of the dead child by transferring these to the newborn.

/199/ Death of an Uncircumcised Boy

763 When an uncircumcised boy is seriously ill the chief of the ndomo (1) has a rooster sacrificed in order to find out if recovery is possible.

1. See p. 222.

In the case of a negative response the children, taking turns night and day, go into the bush and sound off the ritual objects under the leadership of an initiate. In this way the soul of the dying boy is certain to be captured at the moment of death and channeled by the sound wave and led into the ritual objects themselves. Two initiates are posted near the home of the sick and, as soon as they learn of his death, they go to warn the children in the bush to make them stop playing. The chief sits down facing the west and recites a prayer; then he sacrifices the victims offered by the family.

766 Before the corpse is buried, it is circumcised, and the wanzo goes [304] to settle in the mask of the ndomo. During the night following the burial the members go to the fresh grave and sound the ritual instruments which contain the soul. Each year they repeat this action above the children's graves following the threshing of the harvest to "awaken the dead and to tell them that their souls are not lost."

Death at War

127 When a warrior returns home in good health after a battle, the sacrificer or the village chief orders the performance of the ni yere klo, "game of the vibration of the soul," to celebrate his return. Men and women gather in the village square to sing: "The soul is come, the light of the soul is come, the drum of the soul will be played for it" (1). Next they form a circle and turning first in one direction and then

1. Ni nana, ni yelengu nana, ni dunu na fo o la.

in the other, throw a little water on the head of the individual concerned, thus "refreshing his soul."

166 When a man dies at war, the rituals whose object he becomes bring into play the nyama boli of the Komo, the altar dedicated to the conservation of the souls of those who die a vilent death.

In former times the stone which had mortally hit a warrior was carefully kept. The corpse was washed /200/ on cowries and on stones used for slings because its nyama, which impregnated them, made them more efficient in killing. The body was also transported to the exit of the village where each villager offered cowrie shells while he pronounced the name of the victim. Then it was swung three times in the direction of the village, first feet forward and next head forward. After all the villagers had retired to their homes, the Komo was brought out. The stone that had killed the man was struck to call forth his soul; then it was rubbed on the nyama boli to make the soul penetrate the altar. A dance was held with the altar, and the body [824] was buried and covered with fresh branches of ngamyã (2). The grave was watered to "refresh the dead man" while the chief

2. Celtis integrifolia.

was watered to "refresh the dead man" while the chief of the Komo made sacrifices over the nyama and the nimara boli.

Death Away from Home

166 167 The necessity of performing the rituals as well as their detailed quality are such that a Bambara is always advised against expatriation.

766 In fact, if he dies far away his breath cannot be captured nor can the
167 successive transfers be made. For this reason the family head disclaims all responsibility in such a case by warning those who are about to leave for along time of the impossibility of fulfilling his duties toward them.

Nevertheless, a ritual has been instituted for the young men obliged
766 to leave the family groups because of military service. The case is submitted to the chief of the Komo and the party concerned has two goats sacrificed over the altars. While the blood runs, the chief asks the Komo to watch over the soul and to be willing to reclaim it as it would if the person died among his family.

If the news of the death of an absent person spreads, the family
[187] questions the Komo through divining procedures to find out if the soul has returned and if, by this fact, order has been reestablished.

Death by Lightning and Drowning

761 Death which occurs in certain ways considered abnormal and a
766 proof of Faro's wrath does not permit the reincarnation of the spiritual principles. This is true of men killed by the Komo for sorcery, and of people struck by lightning for having broken a taboo of Faro's. Their /201/ soul and their double are lost forever to their descendants, and their bodies thrown into the common grave.

Drowning is either accidental or due to Faro's wrath, in which case the corpse is returned with the nose and navel cut. In both instances, the double preserved in the water is not lost, but sacrifices are necessary for the return of the soul and of the double to a child in the family.

If the body has not risen to the surface, the father of the drowned person has the right to mourn him only when all the rituals have been performed. He asks the chief of the Komo to intercede with Faro to obtain his permission to search for the body in the water. He offers seven tomatoes which the chief throws into the water in exchange for the corpse in the presence of seven elders of his age grade. Some Bozo mobilized for this purpose dive in to bring back the body. The chief cuts the nose and the navel which he throws into the water as an offering. Then the corpse is placed flat on its stomach and pressed
[821] vigorously to extract the water, for to bury it full of water is equivalent to "burying rain" and dooming the countryside to drought.

766 After the burial,[1] a drawing is made on the sanctuary with millet
532 mash made of grain from Faro's field; this drawing represents the dead man and the mutilations inflicted upon him. The seven attending elders close their eyes as a sign of respect in order not to "register a drawing made for Faro." In fact, its aim is to obtain the spirit's pity and to ask him to include the dead among the count he keeps of his
[769] subjects. It is also in front of this drawing that the family will come to make an offering and mourn every week.

II. Rituals of the Refuse

364 The debris, sweepings, and refuse collected in the homes, court-
778 yards, public squares, and crossroads all contain forces which men have communicated to them.

The rituals, of which these are the objects and which vary according to their origin, have as their aim the offering of these forces to Faro who returns them to men purified and regenerated in the form of rainwater with which he irrigates the fields and in the form of ponds and wells. They are thus redistributed and used again for the benefit of the community.

The refuse at the crossroads, called dangu kalaw, stalks or straw of the dangu, contains the force, nyama, of all the beings that have trampled it.

/202/ The refuse from the homes contains the wanzo of the uncircumcised, the nyama which the inhabitants have to bear for having killed animals or insects and for having received insults, and their good or bad tere. These forces, called wanzo dla (literally, to arrange the wanzo) (1) or nyama dla, constantly come to the aid of all the

1. This term is applied to them particularly in houses where there are many children.

members of the family; they improve the wanzo of the uncircumcised, facilitate the women's childbirth, and renew the vigor of the old men. A small altar, konye, kept in the room reserved for the head of the family, is dedicated to them.

After the coming out of the Koma, the sweepings gathered on the spot where the dances take place contain the forces of the members.

[1] [Of a drowned person — Analyst]

364 778 782 (a) Household refuse, collected individually, is placed in separate piles inside shallow circular excavations dug out at the approaches to the villages (see Pl. VI, b). Among wealthy people a goat is sacrificed each week by having its throat cut above the pile on which the altar is temporarily placed. The sacrifice effects a double exchange: the blood nourishes the altar while at the same time it brings about the transfer into the altar of the forces contained in the refuse.

364 778 796 Every two months and seven days, at the decision of the village chief, these individual rubbish piles are removed from the holes. Each person burns his own pile and inhales the smoke. The ashes are deposited on the river bank, dampened so that the wind does not blow them away, and abandoned during seven days, a period during which Faro "comes to visit them and to bless them."

On the eighth day, after a meeting at the chief's residence, the villagers gather at the crossroads to burn the collective refuse piles, to collect the ashes, and to transport them, accompanied by the rhythm wanzo foli beaten on the drums, to the river bank where they will join those of the individual heaps.

After a sacrifice offered upon the konye altars of the participants, the griot of the Komo is struck by the nyama boli until he goes into a trance and flings himself into the water without saying a word. All must throw their ashes in after him before he comes out again. At that moment the spittles of the man who flutters about in the water are collected as a gift from Faro in exchange for the refuse which has been thrown in. Each person rubs his hands and feet with the saliva and upon returning, which is done in silence, impregnates the threshold of his home with it as evidence of the sacrifice so that Faro "might recognize his own and protect their life."

/203/ The following Thursday the people gather to dance according to the rhythms appropriate to each sex and generation. In the evening, each person places his foot on the site of the refuse heap; then all gather at the crossroads to offer the Soba spirit some millet, cotton, and kola nuts. The ceremony ends with a meeting at the chief's residence where he gives advice and encourages each one to respect tradition and to honor the ancestors and the protecting spirits.

(b) After the comings out of the Komo, the refuse is swept up and deposited in front of the sanctuary. Each participant leaps over the pile three times to communicate his nyama to it. In the evening the masker circles and whistles around the heap on which fire is lit while

364 778 796 the chief throws dust three times to the four cardinal points. The masker then stands in the wind in such a way as to receive the smoke; the chief and the members crouch in line behind him with their mouths open to inhale better. When the wind changes its direction they all move to continue this fumigation, wusuli, which constitutes a purification as well as an increment of forces. At the moment the fire is almost out, the most courageous of the participants stamps on it in order to assimilate better the nyama which it exudes. The ashes, [804] gathered by the chief, are distributed, the unit of measurement being the gourd mure. An important share goes to the nyama boli, another is given as an offering to Faro, and a third is distributed among the members.

Several days later, the group goes to the river bank to the sound of drums beating out the murumuruw foli (literally, rhythm of the refuse); they throw the ashes reserved for Faro into the water and, continuing to dance, return to the village.

364 778 252 Those ashes given to the members are used to prepare the potass which is mixed into the millet cake, the daily food of the Bambara, and which will make the members of the family share in the powers contained in the nyamanto.

364 778 The eating of this mixture closes the cycle of the transfer of forces, which were temporarily communicated to the refuse by the individuals, then recovered by Faro, and finally redistributed to the social body.

III. Rain Rites

789 241 At the time the first work is done in the fields, a drawing is made with millet mash upon the tree of the Kworè in the shape of a lozenge inscribed within a rectangle, which represents "the great fire which issued /204/ from the cardinal angles" at the time of their creation. While this is being done, the following words are spoken: "The four elbows (the lozenge) are the fire of the angles; here is the anniversary of the Kworè." The clearing of the field or the first plowing always symbolizes the very first clearing obtained through fire.

789 796 794 During the month of May, the members of the Kworè society make sacrifices upon their altars before the first rumbling of thunder in order to purify the first sky where clouds are formed from the impure passage of Mousso Koroni. The chief gathers the members about the tree and recites the following prayer:

789 "I have come to you, Kworè, if (the cloud) is black in the east,
796 let it come; black in the west, let it come; black in the south, let it
794 come; black in the north, let it come; black above, let it come, and then let it give a great water" (1). He next pours on the ground the

1. Ne nani na kwore nani na; a ma fi korona a ka na; a ma fi klebi a ka na; a ma fi woro dugu a ka na; a ma fi keñeka a ka na; a ma fi sife a ka na; otumana a ka ke dyi ba ye.

millet mash and the blood of fowls brought by each member. The initiation of the new members takes place during this ceremony.

After the drinking of millet beer which follows the ceremonies, it is customary to tell the story of Mousso Koroni chased by Pemba and pursued by Faro.

If, in spite of this the rain does not come soon enough, the members gather at the foot of the tree and bring with them an iron axhead which is placed in fresh water. The water is next poured out at the foot of the tree; it symbolizes the cold which the spirits of the Kworè are subjected to in the second sky during their struggles to make the rain come through.

In certain villages the sacrifices to the Kworè and to Faro are offered at the same time. At Massala and Soroba, the members go to the shore of the Niger, carrying the kworè boli with them. The bit of water which it contains is poured into the river and replaced while a prayer is addressed to Faro. The throat of a victim is then cut and some copper is thrown into the river. The altar is shaken above the water to imitate the noise of thunder and rain. Upon their return to the village, the members light a fire at the foot of the Kworè tree and place thunder stones in its embers.

"Heating the stones shakes up their soul"; when they are hot, they are plunged into cold water "to warm and to agitate the soul of water." The smoke from the fire, as well as the heat absorbed by the stones and the water, force the rain to fall.

/205/ Victims are sacrificed and the members return to the village around which they circle six times, beginning at the west. Then they return the nimara boli to the sanctuary and the elders who represent the spirit dance about on one foot to the sound of drums

as an imitation of Faro who has only one lower limb. The altar, which is placed in the sanctuary by the chief who enters it walking backwards, receives as an offering a little water from the Niger in which thunder stones have been soaking since the night before to be "refreshed." The same libation is made on the kwore boli. After returning to the home of the chief of the Komo, libations of millet mash are poured upon the walls of his house; then, in the name of Faro, the nimara boli, and the Kwore, the throat of a white ram is cut; the flesh of the animal will be thrown into the river, at the conclusion of the ceremonies.

(c) At the end of the winter season the "anniversary of the Kworè" is celebrated; its purpose is to commemorate the action of the spirits during the preceding season in order to obtain rain water.

On the fixed day, members of the society, wearing loincloth and carrying in their left hand a whip made of macerated and twisted grass, and in their other hand a torch of burning straw, gather near the tree around which they circle and sing to "gather up the Kworè." The cracking of whip lashes which they give each other represents thunder claps; the beating of the drum which accompanies their songs imitates its rumbling. The burns which they inflict upon themselves recall those which the spirits endure in the celestial combats. They next direct their steps toward the public square where the villagers have gathered and where the spirit they have supposedly invoked by their mimicry is leading them. When all have gathered, the kworeduga, who represent the spirits mounted on their winged horses ready to fly into combat, appear dressed in their traditional costumes and riding their wooden horses.

They advance while dancing and singing verses which are then taken up by a chorus of the members. The latter having formed a circle, the chief places himself in the center, whipping himself, burning himself, and pretending to swallow the fire of his torch. When he is weary he stops and the members take turns to imitate him. Powder made from ground pepper is blown into the dancers' eyes to recall the burning heat of the fiery heavens.

The kworeduga, who have by then put down their wooden horses, set their foot on the earth ready for the fight, after having seized some green tree branches. They put out the fire which has caught onto the clothing of the dancers and participants. This gesture recalls the action of the wind which, in space, put out the hot fire that

794 attacked /206/ the fighters. Between dances the participants drink beer
796 brought to the spot for the occasion in order to nourish the invisible beings which they represent.

[262] All the participants also eat a dish made up of peas, beans, groundnuts, rice, manioc, millet, fonio, cooked with baobab leaves and karite oil. This mixture is identified with the spirits' struggle with the clouds which they supposedly swallow at the height of the battle. When the ceremony draws to an end, the chief sends the women and children home and fetches the kwore boli which he swings eighteen times over the square.

In a file, the members of the society return to the tree to "bring back" the Kworè which, while invisible, has been present at all the ceremonies. They circle around the tree singing to the rhythm of the drums. Then they put out their torches and throw them at the foot of the tree along with the whips before returning to their homes.

[752] Their wounds and burns are cared for by their wives with water from the Kworè altar, this medication bearing the name of kworè kane (remedy of the Kworè).

The same dances and the comings out of the mask take place three days in succession. On the fourth day the chief and the elders, all undressed, crawl to the sanctuary for the annual sacrifice offered inside it. The chief gathers the thunder stones collected during the past year and places them in the sack containing the altars which are to be sold.

To "clarify" the mirrors, he pours millet mash over them; he cut the throat of fowls and places kola nut juice over the snake and the ñõ boli; he next fills the ñõ boli with millet previously taken from that of the Komo. With the remaining seeds he makes a mash with which to pour a libation over the sack. He next passes a burning twig of straw over the snake while saying:

"You, snake, you do not fear the fire; you must not fear fire and rain" (1).

1. E ngorongo e ma sira tasuma ne e kana sira sandyi tasuma fie.

The effect of this action is to prepare the snake by means of these burns and to attract lightning whose effects it must not fear.

IV. Rites for the Renewal of the Year

196 These rites involve individual, familial, and collective actions;
183 the latter bring into play most of the institutions (1). Everyone, from

1. As examples of collective rites we present those which are performed on the stone altars of the village (fara ba) (see p. 129).

the newborn to the elder, must undergo a kind of purification which consists essentially of the /207/ rejection of the breath and forces of the past year and of the taking in of new breath and forces. It is, according to Bambara expression, " a refreshing of the body and soul. " But the renewal is not limited to elements which make up the person; it extends to the cosmos and the cardinal points.

1. The individual rite of the family chief is performed with the instrument ngoni, which is used to make on the wall of his česo the drawings representing the universe. (2) He starts out with an offering

2. See p. 172, Fig. 10.

of tomato juice to Faro who presides over the family use of the object and who is present thereafter. The fruits are squeezed; a hedgehog
[185 is sacrificed over the juice so that no other spirit may touch it. Next
182] the man sacrifices a gray lizard as a reminder of his own condition before circumcision. This sacrifice represents a new circumcision offered to Faro and increases his strength.

The man who is offering the sacrifice puts his tongue in the juice of the fruit without swallowing a drop in order to give Faro " a complete accounting of all his acts and thoughts during the past year (work, births, deaths, illnesses, quarrels, fortune, and misfortune) just as a subordinate gives an accounting to his superior. " He puts his right little finger in the liquid and places it on the wall over the drawing representing Faro. Then he sucks in a little of the tomato juice through his nostrils and blows it over the ngoni, thus sweeping away the remaining life from the past year which he still had in his body. A new air which comes from Faro then circulates in his lungs. He next fills his mouth with the liquid contained in the male goatskin of the instrument and spits it out immediately to show the spirit that

all is returned to him. He then goes to the river or to the edge of Faro's pond, where he drinks a little water as a purification for the year to come.

2. On the day chosen for the family ceremony, the ngoni is solemnly removed from the room where it is usually kept hidden from view, and is presented to the family assembled before the door.

The rhythm called kalafoli is beaten out on the frame; the effect of this is to return the soul (ni) of the participants to the river or well. Then another rhythm, representing Faro, is played on the net to call in the renewed soul which has been returned by the spirit. Everyone opens his mouth and inhales the new, beneficial emanations coming over the family. When the rhythm ceases they all shut their mouths and return home without speaking. At the entrance door the children are given little strokes on the back with a little rope, sebe dyuru /208/ "to receive and withstand all that the new year will bring."

The instrument is then replaced in the home while all the participants shut their eyes in order not to see it. The owner goes into a trance, a fact which shows that Faro himself carried the instrument to the place where it will remain during the year. The man walks out backwards from the room where he has placed it and is carried into his ceso, where he receives special care intended to return him to his normal state, which includes a purification performed on his individual altar, cuafebyeni (1).

1. See p. 175.

3. The collective ceremonies for the renewal of the person are first performed on the stone fara ba of the village.

The "signs of creation" (bolo ti doniya), engraved with a red-hot iron on a gourd as a request to the ancestors for their support, are presented to the participants. Next, the stone is removed and the objects covered by it are checked, the group thus assuring itself that none has been displaced during the year. Then they proceed to the reconstruction of the ritual drawings. The operator first draws the torches representing the fire used in olden times by the ancestors to defend themselves against attacks and dangers from the outside while they were building the village. The following prayer is recited:

"You, torch of fire, I have prepared you in the mountain (from which our ancestors came), you who keep the souls of the village, protect us from those who wish us harm, fire" (ter) (2).

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2. E mɔ̀ nɔ̀ tasuma, ñe e ɲu kulu la ke dla,
dugu nimara ba ke, i kã kla kelenyɔ̀ na,
tasuma (ter).

Then he draws, as on the ancestors' caps, a black dot which represents the womb of women as well as Faro. The latter will help men by giving them water, for without his help "none, not even the Kworé, have the rain necessary for agriculture.

Three small figures represent the three responsible chiefs of the Kworé who are subjected to the fire rites and who withstand with courage for the common welfare all the sufferings and burns. The other members are represented by four silhouettes to indicate their inferior position by a feminine number. The entire grouping of personages and torches converges on the black dot to show that "the men by their feet and the torches by their fire throw back their nyama toward him."

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When the drawings are finished, all the participants in turn place their little finger and then their tongue on them to abandon the nyama of the year and to receive new forces. The women use the same gestures as the men but repeat them four times. Each person then receives, respectively, three /209/ or four lashes of the whip on his back so as to integrate properly within him these new elements (3).

3. The little finger acts upon the nyama
of the body, and the tongue upon the nyama
of words.

The children, led by their mothers, are the objects of similar attentions. The boys press their toes upon the stone; the little girls present their genitals to it to prove their femininity. All are then seated in turn on the stone so that the old nyama leaves them through the anus. Then, they are lifted up above it by their parents and "are shaken in all directions to settle properly the newly received nyama in them." The mothers pass their hands over the fact of their children and then over their own, a gesture which binds them to their offspring for the year to come.

The assembly goes to the Kworé stone where the cardinal points are renewed by brandishing lighted torches to the west, north, south, and then east. Each person apologizes for the faults committed during

796 783 the year. The men in turn each place their right foot on the stone and turn in succession toward the cardinal points, inhaling deeply with open mouth and extended tongue as though "to breathe them in."

The women do the same, but place their middle finger on the stone; [785] at the same time they receive four whip lashes on the back so as to "sustain (1) the change of the cardinal points with pain."

1. The more familiar term, "to receive" would be a better translation.

With heads lowered and hands at their back, the sick persons would present to the stone those parts of their bodies which are the source of their sufferings, saying: "Here is the evil that is in my flesh" (2), for

2. Nka soko la ba na fle ninye.

the stone is both responsible for and a depository of illness. The one-eyed and blind show their closed eyes. The cripples place their affected limb upon it. Then the initiated elders, completely naked, encircle the stone while recting a formula in the ancient language (3).

3. Dede kumbeyde mala kay kapo kumbey de malado. This text would mean: "stone, mistress of all, fear nothing, your children are there."

Next, the young men run around it rapidly rotating their right arms with closed fists. By this gesture, they are asking the stone to help them find a wife. The young girls follow them, walking in their footsteps, a gesture of docility which also expresses their desire to marry.

The ceremony ends with beer drinking which lasts three days. Each person is happy and gay at having "renewed" his soul; the young people will marry and children will be conceived.

1: Dieterlen--269 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

/210/ Chapter 8

DIVINATION

181 If we still find it difficult to isolate the general principles of divination among the Bambara, it is possible nevertheless to perceive identical elements among its diversified aspects. As soon as we approach the mechanisms and the symbols employed by the diviners, it appears that the first and fundamental element of divination is the "word," the creator of life, the motivation of the cosmos, and the power of Faro.

To foresee the future is to reveal to the secular the "word" which is situated in space as well as in time, and which is the will and the material expression of that will. Destiny is understood as the realization of the designs of creation to which all must conform. To submit to this will is supreme wisdom. To inquire into the reason for a past state or event, or to determine the attitude to be taken in the face of future states or events, is what the wise man can and must do.

The supernatural powers, rightful masters of the word, alone have to power to reveal it. They have done this in mythical times for all men by teaching them technologies capable of reparing the repeated disorders brought about in the process of creation. They do this for each individual if he is in need of it and if he knows how to read through the various methods of gaining knowledge which they have put at his disposal. It is therefore to them that the diviner addresses himself in order that the word be communicated.

181 801 Which will be the privileged signs over which the diviners will bend their efforts? It appears that these are numbers, notably the first twenty-two. In fact, all aspects of physical and moral life are inscribed in them. Taken as a whole, they reflect the succession of events in space and in time. A complex symbolism, which is superimposed over the others, is assigned to each one separately.

Each number has one or several meanings appropriate to it. /211/ It is odd or even, a notion linked to that of duality which has been so frequently mentioned in the course of this work. The sum of several numbers also expresses a particular idea which is added to those recovered by each element. Finally, a value is attributed to the succession of numbers, which is the first expression of time (1).

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1. This expression is symbolized by the progression of the first four numbers in the preliminaries of creation. See p. 23.

The first 22 numbers, which represent the totality of "words" and which express the sum total of the Bambara's mystical knowledge, must be considered from different angles according to whether they are seen as the 22 fundamental elements of creation, the 22 elements of the domination of this creation by Pemba, or the 22 methods and periods of the reorganization of this creation by Faro. In this series appears clearly the classification of elements composing the human being, ni, dya, tere, according to dualism which is Faro's own character and principle of action.

Moreover the stages of time, which itself did not exist before his domination, are expressed by the succession of numbers, each of which is linked to a part of the myth.

Current divination utilizes the first 22 elements at the level where they express "the order and the word of Faro."

1. kele. Faro; the word. Number of the master of the word. District of the chief; the right of the eldest, the right of the first; the head. The conscience: psychical aspect, moral aspect.

2. fla. Original duality, twinness. Faro's two female twins, the two first human twins. Love and friendship; union of beings. Necessity for man, however, to be straightforward in his action, not to follow two tracks.

3. saba. Sexual symbol of man and his soul. Birth of mixed twins, sons of the sinful Bozo women.

4. nani. Sexual symbol of woman and man's double (dya). Birth of a Bozo girl.

5. duru. Unlucky number composed of 4 (woman) and 1 (incompleteness). Miscarriage, failure, death. A stillborn child is called duru. However, it has an auspicious aspect and so signifies the universe (2).

2. See p. 24.

6. woro. Symbol of male twins (3 and 3). Lucky number (3).

3. Dëke ni fla ye gariseke ye, "two little male twins, that is luck."

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801 7. wolõfla. Symbol of mixed twins (3 and 4). Complete man possessing the ni and dya of opposed sexes. Complete world; growth /212/ of nature. Ideal image of creation; perfect word.

8. sekin. Symbol of female twins (4 and 4), of the eight ancestors and their word. Excess of words; danger of this excess caused by women.

9. konoto. Symbol of character or tere. Incompleteness.

10. tã. Composed of 6 (male twins) and of 4 (female birth), it is a lucky number and expresses the fertility desired by Faro as well as Faro himself.

11. tã ani kele. Conflict and debate. During the eleventh period after Faro's domination, Téliko wanted to resist.

12. tã ani fla. Téliko's attempt to dominate the world and to connive with men.

13. tã ani saba. Composed of 3 (Téliko, male spirit) and 10 (Faro): expresses Faro's opposition to Téliko's domination.

14. tã ani nani. Téliko's voyage.

15. tã ani duru. Téliko's defeat.

16. tã ani woro.
17. tã ani wolõfla.
18. tã ani sekin.
19. tã ani konoto.

} Faro's work in organizing the universe.

20. muka. Meeting of Faro and Téliko to decide on the order and progress of the universe.

21. duka ani kele. Faro's complete domination over creation.

22. muka ani fla. Total of the periods elapsed between the creation and the organization of the world. Conclusion and "end of the words."

The symbolism of numbers in everyday life comes into play every time they occur. From the beginning they were used to qualify tools and utensils. According to whether these belonged to men or women, they were marked respectively with three or four easily recognizable signs, indicating their ownership. Thus, in weaving, the shuttle carried three bobins, the spindle four lines.

Each ritual is repeated three times in the case of a man, four times in the case of a woman. If it is performed several days running or at regular intervals, the same rhythm is observed. Thus the dya of a drowned man is fed every three days, or every four days in the case of a drowned woman. The organization of the chief's district

787 and the priesthood is founded on the same laws. A religious chief is
801 generally accompanied by two aides or two elders belonging to his age grade. The group they compose is a duplication of the first three of the eight original ancestors.

Seven, the expression of perfect creation appears notably in the repetition of Faro's name when a request is addressed to him relating to fertility which may by symbolized /213/ by a male-female couple whose number is seven. To say Faro's name alerts him, but to repeat it seven times makes him hear that which may best satisfy him and presents him with what he desires.

Eight is the number of the ancestors who received the word and of the families that spread it. Six and eight, images of male and female twins, are at the basis of the Bambara system of numbers and calculations (1). Ten, which repeats unity, is composed of the sum of the

1. See p. 48, n. 1.

first four numbers marking the stages of creation; it represents Faro (2). Twenty-two, which determines the categories of the creative

2. "The religious function of the decade plays an extremely important role among the Bambara because the symbolism of all numbers is included in it as it contains them all. Since it can be made up by the sum of the first four numbers which in themselves express the unity and duality of the being, masculinity and femininity, the fourfold nature of twins, the very essence of existence—in a word the decade—expresses all that which is achieved within oneself, all that which is complete, perfect, and just. The very name of ten, tã, indicates these notions; moreover, instead of tã, ten, the Bambara often say dafare, "it is complete." Consequently, ten is the essential symbol of divinity." S. de Ganay, "Notes sur la théodicée bambara," p. 198.

787 801 thought yo, represents the universe; it is found on all sanctuaries or ritual objects.

Inversely, a number may be attached to an individual because of his behavior. It is said of a wicked man that he is an "eleven." The person who wishes to take power when he has no right to is "twelve." A man who is disgraced because he is denied that which he asks for is "thirteen."

787 Another fundamental element of the divining technique is derived from the state and qualities of the diviner. In order to question the supernatural, no special quality is ordinarily needed other than that normally required of a person making a sacrifice. Thus any Bambara, before making his offering, throws a kola nut on the ground to interpret its position. But the diviner is in a peculiar position. His spiritual elements, constantly in touch with the divinity, are the object of precautions which introduce him into the supernatural cycle and permit him to hear its message. They are, therefore, protected from the impurity which they might acquire in their contact with ordinary men. Because of this, the diviner is forced to respect a certain number of taboos. His double, guarantee for his state, is preserved by the spirits which protect it on the one hand and excercise control over its owner on the other. It is for them a means of action. "If the diviner has received the word and makes a mistake, the spirits may cause him to die." His mouth is filled up /214/ with a force which comes to him from these powers and which he must not misuse.

On the other hand, the trance is the state in which the spiritual is best expressed. In the excitement of the dance, at the frenetic rhythm of the drums, the Komo divines and predicts. At this moment he is entirely under the influence of the spiritual beings which express themselves through him.

Having presented these different points, is it possible in the present state of the inquiry to classify the methods of divination we have observed among the Bambara? This classification which we will attempt is tentative, and the observations will have to be taken up again more profoundly.

A brief description of several methods of divination currently in use is given below, and two of the techniques we have studied more carefully will be explained in detail: divination by guitar playing and divination by throwing cowrie shells (1).

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1. In this chapter we purposely do not approach the study of geomancy, which is reserved for later treatment. This mode of divination has been the object of a detailed description in C. Monteil, La Divination chez les Noirs de l'Afrique occidentale française /Divination among the Blacks of French West Africa/. Geomancy is currently used by the Bambara, by all the chiefs of religious societies, and by all the hunters who are familiar with several types, particularly the nama ti "sign of the hyena," the timba ti "sign of the aardvark," and the tyé dyé "white truth" or trabu. The symbols connected with this type of divination are very complex among the Bambara who state that they possess an autochthonous method of geomancy distinct from the type called "Moslem," with which they are also familiar. This last point seems to be confirmed by the observations gathered by B. Maupoil in Dahomey and explained in his conclusions (see La Géomancie à l'ancienne côte des Esclaves /Geomancy on the Old Slave Coast/, p. 678). Geomancy is practiced in similiar ways on the whole African continent. More than any other activity, its study raises the problem of influences, notably that of Islam, with which we have dealt on page 7.

Methods of Divination Linked to the Idea of the Person

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Knowledge of the person is a constant concern of the Bambara. The body, which supports the spiritual principles, is marked from birth by signs which any knowledgeable individual is capable of interpreting. They determine not only the character (tere) of a person but also, to a certain extent, the destiny that awaits him.

Thus by examining carefully the facial features of a newborn child, his hairline, the shape of his eyes, nose, and head, the lines on his

787 826 forehead, it is possible to predict to a great extent, what he will be or do in life. Later on /215/ the gait, the swinging of the arms, the way of placing the feet, of holding the head or the breasts will complete, for the informed people, the portrait sketched at birth.

Measurement of the dya

[804] Certain indications concerning the individual are also given by the double or twin (dya) (1) which materializes in the shadow of the body

1. See p. 86.

and is measured by using the little finger as a unit. Starting from the top of the head, this operation is undertaken at noon in the sun when the shadow is shortest. The measurements which are noted down are grouped alternatively by three, the male number, and by four, the female number, according to the following table:

1. The first three unit measures (little finger) represent the nerves, pasa (masc.).
2. From the fourth to the seventh, the soft parts, the flesh, bu (fem.).
3. From the eighth to the tenth, the bones, kolo (masc.).
4. From the eleventh to the fourteenth, the body liquids, dyi (fem.).
5. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth, the male genitals, wulu (masc.).
6. From the eighteenth to the twenty-first, the female genitals, bye (fem.).
7. From the twenty-second to the twenty-fourth, the joints, kolonye, (masc.).
8. From the twenty-fifth to the twenty-eighth, the breasts, ši (fem.).
9. From the twenty-ninth to the thirty-first, the backbone, koloko (masc.).
10. From the thirty-second to the thirty-fifth, the womb, dẽzo (fem.).
11. From the thirty-sixth to the thirty-eighth, the intelligence, hakili (masc.).

781 826 12. From the thirty-ninth to the forty-second, pettiness, stupidity, misenya, (fem.).

13. From the forty-third to the forty-fifth, judgment, calmness, basigi (masc.).

14. From the forty-fifth to the forty-ninth, incoherence, agitation, hakiliwuli (fem.).

[804] These groupings are symbolized by little sticks whose length increases for male measures and decreases for female measures.

Example: if the measure of the individual stops at group 7, he will be represented by four sticks (males) of increasing size and by three others (females) of decreasing size and different aspects.

/216/ Whatever their number, these sticks are then placed in the following manner: those of the nerves in a dry receptacle, those of the flesh in millet flour, those of the bones on a hard stone, those of the liquids in water, those of the male genitals on the testicles of a male goat, those of the female genitals on the vulva of a mare, those of the breasts in karite oil, those of the womb in water from the Niger or a well, those of the intelligence in fresh milk, those of calmness and judgment in water. On the stick representing the joints is shown the name for lion; on that representing the backbone, the word dyose, (literally, point of support); on that representing pettiness, the name for dung beetle; on that representing disorder and agitation, the words muso dãga (literally, accursed woman).

A prayer is recited over the sticks which are then grouped and counted with their numbered representation and their symbolism according to the complicated calculations whose details we will not enter upon here (1). This prayer and counting are called: faro

1. It must, nevertheless, be noted that the total of the signs is (7 x 3) + (7 x 4) or 49.

kanubaya, "love of Faro." They indicate his solicitude for his subjects and were supposedly revealed to men by the swallow messenger at the time of the first girl twins' birth.

781 826 843 Each of these measurements corresponds to a certain moral and physical behavior of man, predetermined by Faro before one's birth. It is therefore possible, by measuring the dya of a pregnant woman,

787 to know the sex of the child a woman is carrying and the character
826 which will be attributed to him by the spirit.
[843] Without further elaboration on this method of divination which implies a series of interpretations, it suffices to note that it is integrated into the system of Bambara thought and inspired by the conception he has of man's place in the universe.

Divination by the Kola Nut

787 The kola nuts which the Bambara eat and use in their sacrificial or divinatory rituals are classified into seven categories according to their form and color.

1. dangoro, red nut.
2. yeleworo, white nut.
3. sosokuworo (literally, mosquito head), a red nut pointed at one of its extremities.

/217/ 4. flaniworo (literally, twin kola), a white nut with the same signs on both its halves.

5. worodanda (literally, kola without a mouth), a nut of two colors without an apparent crack permitting it to be divided.
6. bassiworo, a dark red and very bitter nut.
7. nyeworo, a nut of light and indeterminate color.

The kola nut, "created for Faro's twin girls," is itself a symbol of duality, for both its adhering halves are easily separated. In daily life, unless the diviner has ordered it as a purification, a kola nut is not eaten by one person alone; it is divided and one of the halves given to a third person. This gesture of politeness and friendship is also the expression of the duality of man, comparable to that of the fruit itself.

[576] To give kola nuts is always a sign of deference, respect, or affection. To eat a white nut "chases away sorrow and worry." The nut without a crack is rarely eaten. As it appears to be of one piece, it has an inauspicious character. In religious ceremonies the bassiworo nuts are preferred for the boli; the ordinary red nuts, dangoro, for the other altars. The pointed nut, sosokuworo, is offered by one who wants a child. The officiator chews half the nut and spits it onto the altar before eating the other half.

787 Divination by the kola nut is practiced in numerous cases concerning the individual and the community. Moreover, it precedes almost all the sacrifices performed on the different altars. Before the throat of a victim is cut, the question of the consent of the beneficial power is posed. This method is used for spirits who are invoked by means of a recited prayer at the time the nut is divided but before it is thrown. The color and shape of the nut are chosen according to the question formulated, as well as according to the quality of the being whose mediation is sought. If the plea is addressed to Faro, for a marriage for instance, the nut must be white; if the spirits of the earth or the skies are questioned, it must be red; for a birth or a death and for all requests to the spirits of the west, the beneficial nut, yeleworo, is used. On the contrary, as a protection against an enemy or to convey a curse, the spirits of the east are invoked with the mouthless nut, worodanda. A good divining nut must, in addition, show a kind of design, called yeleda (literally, mouth for laughing, at the intersection of the two pieces composing it. It is also fitting that it be /218/ pointed at one extremity to "prick the subject" benefiting from the ritual. The officiator, who has divided the nut lengthwise into two parts, following its natural dividing line, holds the two pieces in his hand and recites the following prayer:

"Faro, my mother, Faro, my father, spirits of the earth, spirits of the skies, spirits of the west, spirits of the east, you who are better than all of them, Faro, here are the kolas, let truth be unveiled, let the two (pieces) part at the top. I say, you, Faro" (ter) (1).

1. Ne ba faro ne fa faro du kuma ɲinew,
sãnfe ɲinew [illegible]lebi ɲinew, korona ɲinew
dyenin kausa na be ye, e faro, woro fle
tye ka banke fla ka dya safe; ngo e faro (ter).

He may also say more simply:

"Here are two kola nuts, if you refuse, may one be shut and the other open; if you accept, may both be open or may both be shut"(2).

2. Woro fla, fle ninye, ni ma sõ,
kele ka dyã, kele ka bri, ni sona a
fla ka dyã, fla ka bri.

787 This text determines the interpretation of the answer which will be given. The diviner next opens his hand, releases the pieces, and watches the way in which they fall on the ground: if they are arranged in the same way on the inner or outer sides, the answer is affirmative; it is negative.

Divination by Cowrie Shells

This practice is called: kolo nin fli, literally, "to throw the soul of the cowries." These shells are in no way different from those used for trade or ornamentation. Only one taboo is attached to the way in which they are acquired; they must not be bought or obtained without payment. To acquire them, the diviner must secure a loan called [426] kuma boli (literally, to come out of the word); he gives as surety a product or an object which will be reclaimed by him later when he returns the cowries.

The 22 cowries used summarize "that which is necessary to man" and are divided into three groups:

The first seven, teliko dɛ́, sons of Téliko, represent the spirit of the air, Téliko and his children, as well as "the respiration" of men. In fact, it is said of them: "The Téliko spirits are the man's respiration" (1).

1. Teliko ye adamadɛ́ ninakli kuma bo ye.

The next seven, faro dɛ́, sons of Faro, symbolize human /219/ beings. One of them, chosen because it is easy to distinguish from the others, represents Faro; the diviner repeats the name of the spirit seven times over this shell before mixing it with the others, the effect being to give all of them the strength of the spirit.

The last eight, kumabana dɛ́, sons of Koumabana, are the words of the eight great ancestors. One of them, different from the others, is called "mother of words." It is both Koumabana, first of the eight ancestors, and the unequaled word which he "spat" since Koumabana had known "all the words now existing on earth."

Thus 22, the expressions of the universe, summarize the human individual in the system of the 22 cowries: body and soul, Faro; breath and respiration, Téliko; revealed word, Koumabana. The division into three series, two of which are 7 and one 8, is also

181 significant; the number 7 is the sign of the complete man and it occurs twice to recall duality. Eight is the number of the word which animates him.

This type of divination is only performed during the day, for it is disrespectful to alert the spirits at nightfall. Moreover, the orientation of the shells on the ground is important and easier to observe by the light of the sun. The officiator takes the cowries in his hand, three or four times consecutively, according to the sex of the person consulting him, and lets them fall to the ground or onto a tray. He then studies them, following their orientation, and the place they occupy with relation to the mother or the "conclusion of words," according to their open or closed position. Very skilled diviners, who have to resolve complex problems, operate with 22 cowries. But sometimes the eight kumabana dɛ̀ are sufficient.

In this case, before throwing them, the diviner pronounces the following prayer:

"You, eight old ancestors, none has surpassed you in words, your vision was so great that it surpassed the number (of the others); the cowries are thrown, you will show the truth; I say, you, the eight elders, I say, you, good spirits" (1).

1. Aw moko korobaw sekin, moko ma se teme aw ka kuma na, aw ka somaya bonya ma, fo ka dama teme koloniw fle la, aw ka ntiɲɛ jira, ngo aw maw sekin, ngo jinew aw maw.

In the short space of time in which the cowries are thrown, destiny is written. The moment the diviner releases them, "the spirit of the air which controls them, having examined the case, adjudges and proposes. The moment they touch the ground, Faro, master of the last appeal, disposes" (2). The design of the cowries translates his

2. It is said colloquially: "Téliko proposes and Faro disposes," teliko ba singa, faro ba sinze.

word; they /220/ are the expression of his will visible to man through the word revealed by Koumabana. This whole delicate spiritual

787 mechanism, invisible for the ordinary person, unknown to the noninitiate, can be perceived by the seer and the diviner who are conscious of the fact that they are manipulating the divine with the cowries. Because of this they bend over the constantly renewed shape given to the dispersed material with a powerful feeling of the presence of the forces to whom they are appealing.

The Somaya

791 According to tradition, the somaya or science of the soma was revealed in Mandé, that is to say, it was known to the Bambara before their arrival in the territory which they now occupy. It was restricted to a few privileged persons. The gifts of clairvoyance which it presupposes may be discovered in a newborn baby at the time when the signs determining his character (tere) are examined by the elders during the name-giving ceremony. In early childhood frequent manifestations of suffering are a sign of the spirits' presence and from the first steps, the way of walking itself confirms the child's vocation. About the age of ten, the young boy "guided by the Téliko spirits" is attracted by them into the bush near a pond where he lives in their invisible company for several days.

After this retreat the child returns to his village, provided with a little stone (jinaworo, literally, kola nut of the spirits), a sign of the alliance he has contracted with them.

However, he pretends not to know the place he came from. He also never makes any statements concerning the gift of double sight with which he has been endowed, but does manifest it by making some unsolicited revelations about their future to those he encounters. After a time, people recognize by these signs his quality as a Soma, which implies a change in his spiritual principles: the dya remains under the protection of the Téliko spirits who also control the diviner; they act directly on his person and hold his health and life in their power, punishing him in case of an infraction or in case of disorders which are harmful to the exercise of his art (1).

1. A Soma would become a mahalakillen or a harmful animal if his dya were altered through contact with the impure earth.

791 The gifts he has received and the position of his dya compel /221/
589 the Soma to remain unmarried and to observe a certain chastity. "The wife of the Soma lives with the spirits," says the informant who adds that every forty-nine days (7 x 7) his dya is returned to him during the night for the purpose of a sexual union.

From the moment the Soma begins to exercise his art regularly, he visits the bush from time to time to consult the spirits and make offerings to them. Moreover, the latter visit him in his home where he attracts them by burning a powder that gives off a smell of which they are fond.

Like the griot, the Soma has a mouth full of nyama: his own to which is added that of the spirits who help him and control him. His word is so powerful that he rarely announces a death, for this would contribute to the propagation of death.

The Soma must be rigorously clean, wear simple clothes, and even dress as an indigent. During ceremonies he hangs the stone jineworo around his neck with a string and must always carry this stone in a pocket of his tunic. He generally belongs to the Komo society and may become its chief. In this case he is the recognized diviner of the village.

791 The Soma keeps in his home his stone of alliance and his harp
166 with its accessories. When he dies, his body is left for some time alone in the house; the spirits are supposed to come and reclaim these objects which no one must touch and which no one will inherit. The burial of the body and the funeral ceremonies are performed only after this delay. His soul is never kept in the Komo altars and goes to join the dya in the domains of Téliko; the spiritual principles of the Soma are not reincarnated and the gift which he has received is not hereditary.

791 The Soma's harp (Fig. 17) (1) is made of a rectangular chest (bara)
534

1. See G. Dieterlen, Morphologie et symbolique de deux instruments de musique bambara /The Morphology and Symbolism of Two Instruments of Bambara Music/.

pierced through longitudinally by a long piece of wood (ngoni kala, literally, stalk of the ngoni) surrounded by little leather thongs in the shape of rings (jiri wolo, literally, skin of wood). These hold

191
534 the goatskin thongs (ngoni dyuru, literally, ropes of the ngoni). At the end of the stalk, ngoni ku, is affixed an iron percussion plate (boso) decorated with rings of the same metal (nyege nyegele) which are the "earrings of the spirits." These rings are said to be "multicolored' for the sound they emit is blurred and confused.

[532]

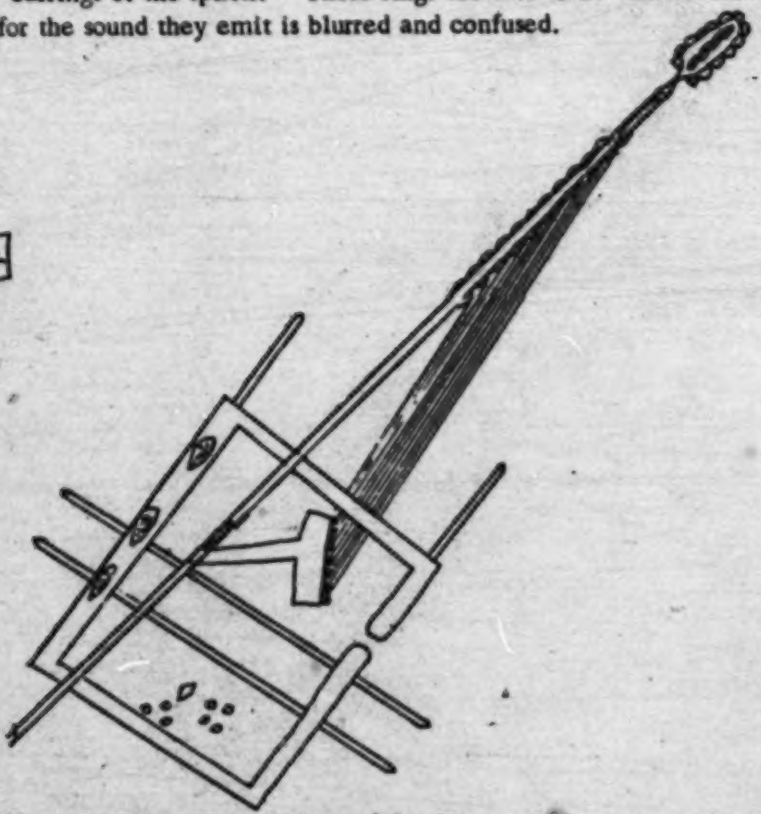

Fig. 17 —The Divining Harp of the Soma.
The instrument represents the face of the ancestor Koumabana who received "the word," and his tomb; on another level, it symbolizes also the face of the diviner and his tomb. (Drawing by an informant.)

When the percussion plate is placed on the handle, "it increases the sounds and filters them in the air, which pleases the spirits and calls them to the diviner whom they assist during his work." If the instrument /222/ is used without the percussion plate, that is to say, for a secular purpose, the spirits are not alerted by the playing of the music.

191 534 The skin, stretched on the box by means of goatskin thongs, is soaked in water over which the name of the spirit Téliko has been pronounced forty-nine times. The supporting strings are made of twisted shreds of shrouds picked up in a cemetery. The musical strings are made of goatskin, numbering eight, /223/ symbol of the word (1).

1. The harp of the Soma differs from that of the griot which usually has even strings.

and are named as follows, beginning with the shortest: kumabana, fa dé (son of the father), fa (father), fa koroke (elder brother of the father), fa dogone (younger brother of the father), ba (mother), modé (grandson), fa so (house of the father).

Tied to a bridge, Jiri ni (literally, teeth of the ngoni), which represents the mouth and teeth of Koumabana, they are the ancestor's words. On another level, they are also the home and the family of the spirit Téliko.

Of a relatively equal length in different harps, they give eight different notes; the intervals are called dyuru fara dye (2).

2. On some instruments we have observed, the first and the eighth string gave the same note at an interval of an octave. It may be predicted that a thorough study of Bambara music would bring to light a system of correspondences between the disposition of musical sounds and that of the world. M. Griaule, in his research on the Dogon harp, has already discovered a relationship between the notes, the numbers, and the universe.

[532] On the right side of the box the three first ancestors of the Bambara are sometimes drawn; Koumabana and the two elders who died after him. They may be recognized by the hair with which their faces are covered, just as those of the ancestors to whom the razor was unknown (3).

3. This detail has been observed on ancient instruments in the region of Koutiala.

791 The box is transpierced by two wooden sticks, če kala (literally,
534 man-stalk), recalling the two millet stalks which accompany every dead man into his grave and which are in themselves symbols of the two elders.

791 When the Soma falls ill, he removes the two sticks from his instru-
534 ment and places them beside him on his mat, anticipating the position
755 he will lie in the grave. Thus stretched out, "he is in the grave and walks with the two ancestors"; if his condition improves the sticks have liberated him from his illness. He replaces them in the harp only after his recovery.

791 The box contains seven pebbles, the number of man (3 + 4) and a
534 piece of copper in the shape of a star symbolizing the word. The Soma may look into the harp through an opening on its side, called šu wo (sorcery hole) or bara dinge (hole of the box), which "permits him to breathe," to see "the ancestor Koumabana, master of the word, and to know the deepest secrets." At the bottom of the instrument another opening, considered the anus, permits the release of all that is harmful.

/224/ A red stain placed on one of the faces, sindera ble (literally, red belt), expresses the fact that the instrument is the object of blood sacrifices like the stone jineworo.

The case is the image, the mask of Koumabana; the two faces, called respectively kini nye, "right eye," and numa nye, "left eye," represent his eyes; the comb, his mouth; the opening, his nose and respiration; the strings, his words. It is also the replica of the tomb and of the first three of the eight ancestors who knew death. Finally, it is the face of the Soma and his tomb.

The instrument must never be touched by a woman; moreover, no one must play it if his intentions are not pure, "if his heart is not clean."

791 When the Soma plays in response to requests from those who consult
533 him, each sound is a prayer. With his free hand he holds a twig with
781 which he strikes the base. Each stroke is a word. As he plays, images form before his eyes and within him. He touches the cords separately according to their position and in relation to the importance of the question that is being asked. Thus, he pinches modé for subjects of little importance: hunt, journey, etc.; fadé for that which is concerned with health, procreation, the physical or moral life of the individual; fa for the future, destiny, the private and public life of a man, his

791 authority, his command; fa koroke for planting and cultivation, the
533 control of water, rains, and ponds, and for fortune and wealth; fa
787 dogone for the germination of grains, the formation of the ears and the light rains; ba for all that concerns women; faso for all that concerns the family house and those who are absent.

But the Soma also plays airs with rhythms accompanied by words. He plays them one after the other during the sitting or choses them according to the character of the person consulting him and the questions raised.

The following seven songs were collected and interpreted by the Soma of Bandiagara:

"A good thing comes with a bad thing" (1). This song has the

1. Ko ñumã de bina ni ko dyugu ye.

effect of revealing to the Soma the thoughts of the consulter.

"Man knows little" (2). In spite of his learning a man knows few

2. Adama dɛ̃ te ko do.

things; a child often knows that which an adult ignores.

/225/ "Even when a man is satiated he may not go beyond the mother who has given him birth" (3). This rhythm is performed for

3. Mako fara čokočoko a tise ka temme a wolo ba ka.

those who show arrogance or vanity, or for those whose wife has left the conjugal home and has taken refuge with her father.

"Even if he is handsome, a man must have eyes (that is, to be informed)" (4). The Soma plays this air whenever there is a marriage,

4. Moko če kani čokočoko fo nɛ̃ ka soro i ku.

a birth, or an initiation.

"The world is big" (5). When anguish overwhelms the consulter,

5. Difiɛ̃ ka bõ.

this song calms his restlessness and gives him back peace and serenity. "Whatever man is, he may not go beyond God" (1). The Soma

1. Moko a kera čokočoko a te teme ngala ka.

plays this air if the consulter harbors bad intentions or if he is ignorant or stubborn. He does the same to discover the gifts of a child and to encourage the family to develop his learning.

"Joy embellishes the world" (2) is performed for futile and pleasant

2. Klo ye dĩne dya.

things: feasts and dances, ornaments.

Divination, in a large measure, is the application of the static and dynamic quality of numbers. On the one hand these translate the relationships; on the other, they are symbols for phenomena, beings, behaviors, situations, and in general all the constituent parts of the universe. Though not endowed with power in themselves, they symbolize powerful and well regulated elements. It may also be said that the numbers are superior realities, the same as the primordial signs which preceded the perceptibility of all things and on account of which the things began to exist once man had taken them into his consciousness. (3)

3. See p. 17.

In the course of divination, they indicate to the individual or collective consulter his personal position with regard to the rest of the universe. In a way, they permit the formulation of a particular equation for each person at a given time.

CONCLUSION

/227/ It is only recently that the discipline of silence adhered to by the Blacks has been relaxed in certain circles of the initiates. Human behavior, backed up by a rigorous method, has allowed a group of researchers to establish a documentation which suffers less from the usual faults. It is no longer superficial or fragmentary; it is

|2| no longer encumbered with a systematic hostility, which by its consistency and generalized character misled us for many years.

Until the present, the facts gathered among the Bambara were chiefly concerned with appearances. The institutions which might be referred to as "mysteries" were only known through allusions made inadvertently by a mulish people. This was true to such an extent that, for example, in the functioning of the Komo the personality of the universal Monitor had never even figured.

But the study of these people suffered from a constraint more serious than esoterism or distrust: the skepticism and indifference of scholarship which systematically, so to speak, has failed to recognize or has denied the existence of a profound thought among the Blacks.

This contribution demonstrates that certain difficulties in approaching the work may be untangled on the one hand, and that on the other it is no longer appropriate to hold an image of the tropical African world as one in which nothing is harmonious, great, or even worthy of speculation.

This contribution also proves the complexity of the facts. A few only were selected from a vast documentation, the work of a team. And even this documentation appears infinitesimal compared to that which can be foreseen.

The fact is that the Bambara—and like him many other Blacks—makes of man a universe and of the universe a system where everything has a place and a role, from the heavenly bodies to objects of everyday usage, from the mind of man to his ordure.

Years of patient research will therefore be necessary to reveal the immense network of representations and rituals so as not to overlook any materials or gestures, however insignificant in appearance. /228/ We know, in fact, from experience that behind each utensil looms a facet of the organization of men, and that a few lines incised without artistry with a fingernail on a wall express the unfolding of creation.

The negligence of the lowliest of these details may shut off whole areas of knowledge. This entails extensive work covering all the activities of a people, not only that which is properly classified in our mind as religious.

Even if we assume a knowledge of an imposing body of facts concerning the Bambara, this would only lend itself to speculation of a specific nature. A description of the structure and function of the religion of these people would certainly constitute a valuable addition to human

12| knowledge. However, the same effort would have to be undertaken with regard to their neighbors so that gradually from one tribe to the next, it can be extended to the whole Black world.

For it is true that, however indispensable it is to order the facts concerning the Bambara themselves and to seek an internal explanation, the comparative method is necessary for the understanding of a religion. This method imposes itself with particular force in this context. The Bambara system does appear to be, on the one hand, the original synthesis of several other systems found by them on the spot at the time when they made their ultimate settlement, or brought along at the time of the great migratory movements. On the other hand this system is in a state of perpetual symbiosis with those of other Sudanese peoples, as is proved indubitably by recent observations.

12| 17| 779 At present we can already state that at least nine tribes of varying importance (1) live on the same metaphysical, if not religious,

1. In the order of increasing depth of studies, we cite the following groups: Dogon and Bambara, blacksmiths, Kouroumba (or Foulsé), Bozo, Manding, Samogo /Samoro/, Mossi, Koulé, altogether amounting to more than two million people. It is fitting to note likewise that several tens of peoples or tribes of the Sudan (in the wider meaning of the word) consider themselves of the same origin. Important rituals, materials, agents, and places reinforce this belief (see p. 2).

foundation. They have a common theme of the creation by means of a word, which is originally motionless and whose vibration determines little by little the essence and later the existence of all things. The same is true of the movement of the universe in a conical spiral which is constantly extending itself. They share the same conception of the person, as well as of the primordial duality, the expression of perfect unity. All these peoples admit the mediation by a hypostasis of the divinity which sometimes takes on the aspect of a redeemer, master of a world, whose appearance is everywhere identical. All believe in the necessity /229/ of universal harmony as well as that of the internal harmony of beings, both being related. One of the

corollaries of this notion is the subtle mechanism of disorder which we call impurity for lack of a better term, and which goes hand in hand with that of highly developed cathartic practices.

Finally, all these offer an extraordinary efflorescence—not to be called abuse—of the spoken, written, drawn, or gesticulated symbols many of which are found everywhere, each one of them being the basis for several levels of images.

We may therefore speak from now on of a Sudanese civilization whose substratum may be discerned among many tribes as it has been among the Dogon and the Bambara in particular. Under the diversity of languages and institutions is hidden the same framework of representations. It is as though each tribe had arranged the designs characteristic of its own genius on an identical canvas.

For this reason, it is appropriate to consider the present essay as a first step toward an understanding of this civilization. In the future, this vast entity will have to take its place in relation to the Mediterranean and Asiatic system. And there is no doubt that this search for its position will bring up problems of borrowings, migrations, and assimilation. And doubtless, too, an anatomy of the old civilizations which had taken refuge in the western impasse in Africa will throw a valuable light on the primitive organizations which were found in contact with each other during the high period in these regions, and which were able toeffect a union between indigenous ways of thinking and others with which we are more familiar.

It is tempting to reconstruct archaic states of humanity with the help of broken potsherds or literary shreds. In the more favorable cases, abundant texts and materials have permitted syntheses, whose vicissitudes are one of the reasons for the existence of erudition. On no occasion has anyone ever been discouraged by terrains without echoes, by the absence of the authors of texts and materials. Thus, a wealth of activity concerning the situations and thoughts of ancient times was instituted, a kind of science shrouded in silence where the spirit of research alone was alive.

Today it seems possible, in the light of new observations, to find among numerous and diverse living people, archaic forms and wellsprings common to men of another color living in another time. This does not imply that one should disregard the cautious advice given by the men of the old schools (1); but this advice rests /230/ on postulates

121 1. Among others J. Toutain, C. R. des Garnered Shelves de J. Frazer /Report on the Garnered Shelves by J. Frazer/.

concerning the absence of historical documents and the difference in periods. To admit these postulates, it is necessary to prove precisely this absence and also the incapability of oral tradition to keep alive the traditions and ways of viewing the world over long periods of time.

In any event, whatever the opinion adopted, it would be good methodology to admit as an immediate hypothesis the probable or possible role played by the Sudanese world as a preserver or transformer of attitudes, rites, and concepts which scholars find everywhere else but which remain unexplained. For in a few years nothing will remain to be either disclaimed or confirmed concerning these systems which are on their way to rapid disintegration. Because of mechanization and an unconscious wish for self destruction the Black civilizations will soon become only a shadow of their former selves and the instability of their material will not allow them to be reconstituted in their complexity and grandeur.

And whatever the fate of this hypothesis, we may find, as a result of such thinking that the religious thought of the Blacks, whether original or not, will take its place in the philosophy of history and in the history of humanity.

/231/ ADDENDA

000 The research conducted in the field during the publishing of the present work has brought to light the following facts which, we believe, it will be useful to present succinctly to the reader.

Chapter 1

776 825 Because of the loss of the seeds in their collarbones, Pemba and Mousso Koroni actually have an animal aspect which they owe to their impurity as well as to that of the uncultivated earth which they symbolize. Pemba is represented by the warableni (Vulpes pallida) and Mousso Koroni by the kongowuluni (unidentified fox). It is this

776 latter animal which is imitated by the vukuri during the children's
825 nocturnal ritual described on page 65.

This new information confirms the observations noted on page 47, footnote 1, concerning the identity of the Bambara and Dogon representations. Moreover, the warableni, like the yurugu (Vulpes pallida) of the Dogon, intervenes in divination, particularly in geomancy. The investigations permit the extension of these representations to Sudanese tribes coming from Mandé (see p. 2), particularly, to the Bozo and the Peul.

Chapter 3

826 All Sudanese peoples originating in Mandé are characterized by the
773 seeds (or fish) contained in their collarbone, these varying from one
824 tribe to another. On the other hand, within a tribe, the theoretical content of the eight seeds, though roughly similar in terminology, differs in arrangement from family to family. Also the positions of the first and last seeds are reversed for men and women. Example: the blacksmiths have as their first seed the keninge and as their last the tikaninkuru, whereas the potters have as their first seed the tikaninkuru which they cultivate in the sacred fields (see p. 170) and as their last the keninge.

Moreover, after Mousso Koroni had stolen from Pemba the seeds he was entrusted to give on earth, Faro, through the intermediary of the /232/ animals who ate them at his order, reclaimed them from her; thus purified, he distributed them to men. The animal, which brought back to Faro the essential seed of each family, becomes the taboo, tne, of the family concerned, and the breaking of this taboo has the basic effect of removing the content of the culprit's collarbone. Analogous representations are noted among the Dogon.

Totemism, the so called "joking relationship" (senankuya of the Bambara), the caste system, and the exogamous laws of the Sudanese are based on the elements and classification of the contents of the collarbone.

Chapter 6

794 All the great adult institutions (dyo) are in contact with the
857 children's society of the Ndomo which reflects the universal organization
772

194 857 172 (space, elements). Each of the six dyo to which men are initiated after their circumcision corresponds to a ritual object in the Ndomo: the Komo (west and air) is represented by the dyara (rhombus); the Kworé (east and water) by the tori; the Nama (south and fire) by the wulu; the Kono (north and earth) by the instrument of the same name. The Jineble corresponds to the Nya (nadir) and Nago (zenith). These last two institutions are linked with the whirlwind movement of the creative seed, symbolized by the fonio seed. That is to say, membership in the children's Ndomo society constitutes a pre-initiation to the adult societies which are essentially cosmogonic. The sanctuaries and the sacred fields of the first four dyo are theoretically situated at the corresponding cardinal point. The operation of the societies according to a strict system confirms the observations and hypotheses presented on page 10.

Moreover, the mask of the Ndomo represents both Mousso Koroni and the eight seeds stolen from Pemba. All the ceremonies concerning the coming out of Bambara masks (those of the dyo as well as those of the Ciwara and the sogo) recall the theft and cultivation of nourishing seeds by Mousso Koroni and their recapture by the animals on Faro's behalf. Similar representations are observed among the Dogon concerning the yurugu, yasigi, and Nommo.

/For data on age-groups which are associated with the Kworè and Komo societies, see category 794. --Analyst/